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HAPPY CHRISTMAS FROM NGC!

It's customary to mention the word 'November' at least once during the first 20 words of a magazine's Christmas editorial. We have no idea what'll happen if we fail to point out that we are in fact "writing this in November" or "you're probably reading this in November", but we think it might be bad.

That doesn't stop the spirit of Nintendo Christmas exposing itself on every single page this issue. Gamecube's winter line-up makes those of other systems look plain daft. Not only do we get all the multi-format releases that count (*XIII*, *The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*, both *Need for Speed* and *Tony Hawk's Underground*…) but we get the best exclusive titles around – including this Christmas' 'killer app' *Double Dash!!*

It's been too long since we heard the *tick-tick-tick-tick* of joysticks rapidly being thumbed left and right to crack off a turbo. Music to our ears. You watch Gamecubes fly off the shelves and under Christmas trees on the strength of *Mario Kart*. If you haven't got it yet, and you care about heart-pounding, air-punching fun as much as us, treat yourself (or at least get someone else to).

Anyway, it's a 'bah humbug' from Martin and all the best from the rest of us. Have a brilliant Christmas.

The NGC team
NGC@futurenet.co.uk

TURN OVER THE PAGE!
For the full contents listing of this bumper Christmas **NGC**!

WHY WE'RE No.1 FOR NINTENDO

NGC's the result of over a decade of gaming genius – so you're the best-informed Nintendo gamer around.

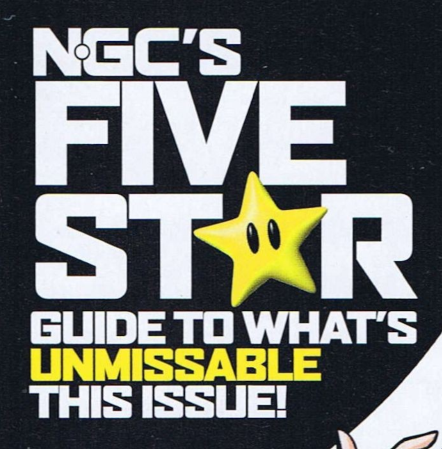


■ In the beginning… there was Super Play. Dedicated to the SNES, it changed videogame magazines forever.

■ As the N64 became the choice of real game fans, Super Play made way for the mighty N64 Magazine.

■ From issue 60, N64 transformed into **NGC** – the ultimate hit for true Nintendo fans!

NGC'S FIVE STAR GUIDE TO WHAT'S UNMISSABLE THIS ISSUE!



1 PAGE 30



MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH!!

WORLD'S BIGGEST REVIEW! More Mario than any other magazine.





METAL ARMS

Sleeper hit? This robot shooter is certainly worth your attention.

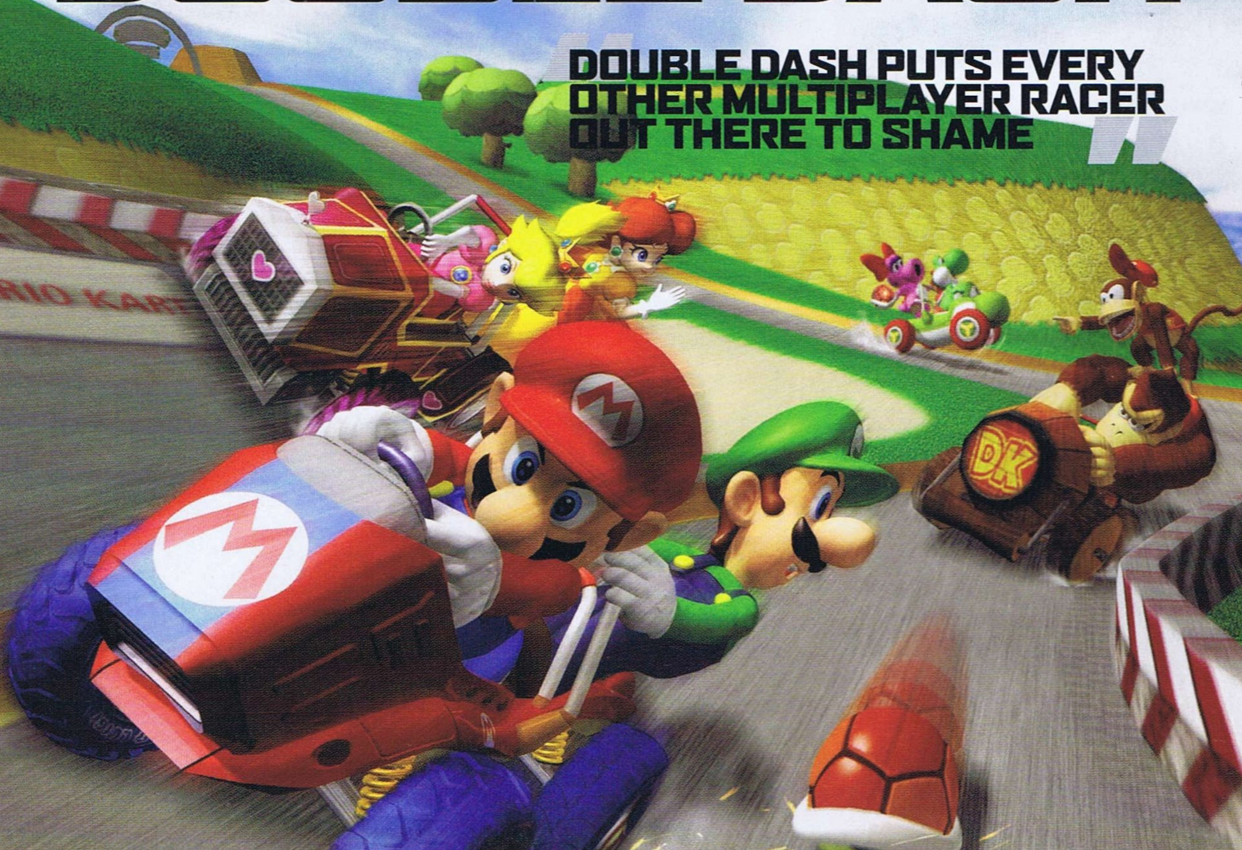
PAGE 30





£5 OFF MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH!! YOUR VOUCHER'S ON P44

MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH



"DOUBLE DASH PUTS EVERY OTHER MULTIPLAYER RACER OUT THERE TO SHAME"

MEET ENJiKi

Being long of leg, Enjiki's Christmas stocking takes a lot of filling. Ladies' man Paul has bought her perfume. Marcus is more sensible – he's giving the forgetful femme a personal organiser. Ger's chipping in with a leek. (We don't give him much pocket money.) Mim is clearly feeling jealous – she's got Enjiki "a nice, thick woolly VEST". And Kittsy? Whatever it is, he killed it himself. It's the thought that counts…







3 PAGE 50

XIII
Shares more elements with GoldenEye than you might think…

4 PAGE 56

TRUE CRIME
Until *GTA* arrives (oh come on, it *might*), we'll have to play good cop. Won't we?

5 PAGE 18

DONKEY KONGA
Get lost, Little Drummer Boy, Donkey Kong's bringing home the beats.

WHAT'S IN NGC?

More satisfying than three turkey dinners and a double helping of pud.

PREVIEWS

Nearly here… but you'll have to wait a tiny bit longer.

18 **DONKEY KONGA**
Talk about tubthumping – this drumming game is never going to get you down.

20 **PAC-MAN**
Retro is sooo yesterday – but this has been touched by the hand of Shigsy. It's *now*.

22 **MARIO PARTY 5**
We'd vote for this party every time, 'cos the central policy is to have FUN.

24 **MARIO & LUIGI SUPERSTAR SAGA**
Not since The Chuckle Brothers has the world had such hairy fraternal heroes.

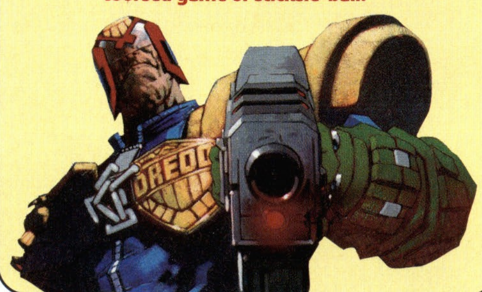
24 **THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT**
The tiny people who live in your Gamecube want more out of life. More, dammit!

24 **JUDGE DREDD: DREDD VS DEATH**
British comics' greatest-ever star takes on his nemesis. Someone fetch the Boing!

25 **WARIO WARE INC.**
The meths-chugging, nose-picking loon is flogging a fine array of goods.

25 **1080º AVALANCHE**
Mountains of snowboarding fun, due to arrive just when the real snow does.

25 **MARIO GOLF ADVANCE TOUR**
Mazza and pals get together for a crazy-coursed game of sticksie-ball.



NEWS

In-depth news, not pointless rumours.

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Gamecube's selling rather well, you know – and there's some new hardware bundles.

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The countdown to Colosseum begins.

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Licking the last bit of fun from the gaming lolly stick.

94 **TIPS EXTRA**
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Well, someone is, but is it you? Put your joypad where your mouth is.

104 **GAME ON**
Turns the crusty underpants of games inside out for some extra longevity.

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Your letters. Some of which, frankly, should be written in crayon. You're allowed pens?

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New issue, new year, new games. It's all so new and shiny, you'll need sunglasses.

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Don't waste gaming time going to the shop – get NGC delivered to you instead.

112 **COMPENDIUM**
All the things you never knew you needed to know - in English *and* Japanese.

114 **END GC**
Being an humorous interpretation of the month's big stories. Oh the hilarity!

REVIEWS

Who needs money? Exchange it for some of these…

30 **MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH!!**
Cute-looking, hard-playing – we love it.

46 **METAL ARMS**
Get out there and smack some 'bots!

50 **XIII**
Brilliant cel-shaded shooter.

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Breathing a little life into a tired genre.

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The Potter panzer rolls on…

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It's not *GTA*. But it's not criminal.

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Taking the battle to the Pacific theatre.

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Not the worst game this month. Oh dear.

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Team strategy battling, Roman-style.

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Hairy-footed sneaking ahoy!

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Proof that feet have no place in Star Wars.

72 **BEYBLADE**
Guess which is the worst game this issue…

74 **NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND**
Good, but we like shells in our racers.

72 **NBA LIVE 2004**
A vintage year for basketball.


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OUR PROMISE

We'll try *really hard* to develop a new 'temporal paper stock' that can defeat the laws of time. That way, your copy of **NGC** will be able to update the news itself. Which would save us having to do it, leaving us more time to perfect our *Double Dash* technique, ready to make anyone who dares to challenge us feel VERY STUPID. But, er… we haven't yet.

NGC BRINGING YOU NEWS FIRST

NEWSDESK

IN NEWS THIS MONTH

POKÉMON WITH PROPER 3D RPG BITS! P10

VIRTUAL REALITY YOU GUYS. BEING TOTAL IDIOTS. P13

F-ZERO GX GO UP AGAINST THE BEST IN THE WORLD! P10

MK ONLINE UPDATE ON GC TUNNELING P12

PLUS!
- Bandai!
- Stars Shatalogue!
- Mario Kart compo

& MORE!



△ This should be selling like hot cakes already, but the Christmas period, along with a cheaper GC, will see it fly off the shelves.

NINTENDO PICK UP THE PACE

NINTENDO'S PRICE CUT GOES DOWN A STORM, GAMECUBE IN GOOD BUNDLE SHOCKER AND NOE'S NEW MANAGER SPEAKS...

Last month's price cuts have performed way beyond our expectations. This time last month when we were putting the finishing touches to the magazine, Gamecube was selling a measly 900 units per week. It was pathetic – and Nintendo clearly needed the price cut that they announced. Much like in the US, in the first week of sale at the new price point, Gamecube sales increased by a staggering 400% to nigh-on 5000 units. The best was yet to come, though, with the following week's sales jumping dramatically yet again, with Gamecube sales reaching almost 10,000 units in seven days – that's over *ten times* the amount that was being sold before the price cut came into effect.

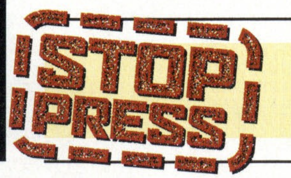
However, it clearly won't be plain sailing this Christmas. In response, Microsoft slashed the price of Xbox and created some very attractive bundles that have, at the time of writing, eclipsed Gamecube's sales. In fairness, Gamecube sales have now settled before the Christmas rush at a respectable 7,000 units a week and Nintendo have had a lightning-quick change of heart about bundling – last issue Marketing Manager Dawn Paine told us there were no bundles planned, but now Nintendo of Europe are planning a number of incentives for punters this Christmas.

> "A SPECIAL BONUS DISC THAT INCLUDES FIVE – YES FIVE – CLASSIC ZELDA GAMES..."

LINK TO THE PAST

Head to the shops right now and you'll be able to pick up a special edition Gamecube bundle that includes a Gamecube, a copy of *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!* and, even better, a special bonus disc that includes five (yes, *five*) Zelda games. The NES' *The Legend of Zelda* and *Zelda (II):The Adventure of Link* as well as the N64's *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* and *Zelda: Majora's Mask* plus a demo version of *Wind Waker*. The bundle has an estimated retail price of 149 – roughly £130 over here – an astonishingly good package in terms of quality gaming hours.

Unfortunately, after contacting Nintendo, they couldn't say whether this retro *Zelda* bonus disc would be made available to anyone who hadn't picked up the bundle,



MARIO: REVOLUTIONS
Apparently, in the famous 'Hollywood Wood Wax museum, Mario will be replacing the Matrix's Neo and Trinity. Manager Tej Sundher is using them to promote the forthcoming Mario and Luigi: Superstar Saga on GBA. Hopefully the Keanu statue will be melted down to make candles for L.A's homeless.

SPECIAL EDITION POKÉ - PACKS

We've always been partial to some special edition Game Boys but these are quite, quite lovely.

Nintendo are releasing two special edition Pokémon 'Super-Paks' to correspond with both *Pokémon Ruby* and *Sapphire*. Each pack contains a limited edition red or blue Pokémon-branded GBA SP (obviously, which colour you get depends on which version you buy), an SP carry case and a copy of either *Ruby* or *Sapphire*. These lovely little bundles will be available from the 28th November and will retail for a not so lovely £140-£150. Ouch.





something that will probably annoy existing Gamecube owners. Hopefully, by the time you read this Nintendo will have rectified matters.

AND FINALLY...
Remember we introduced NoE's new general manager, David Yatton last issue? C'mon, you must do. Well, he's already started speaking his mind. He had this to say about Gamecube's success. "The new price for NINTENDO GAMECUBE is great news for everyone, ensuring the console and our great range of software is available to all. The NINTENDO GAMECUBE library of games are unbeatable, and with all the major players developing exclusive and unique games for our system, there has never been a better time than right now to enjoy NINTENDO GAMECUBE." By the looks of it *someone's* been taking PR lessons DON'T YOU THINK?



VIOLENCE IS GOLDEN

MORE LOVELY KILLER 7 SHOTS FOR YOU THIS MONTH, SHOWING LASHINGS AND LASHINGS OF...



Completely unnecessary levels of blood-soaked violence. Bongo! Once again, Capcom aren't letting much slip about the exact form the gameplay will take. We do know it's intensely story-driven and that the player won't have the level of control available in your average third-person adventure. Instead, players will have to make choices for the character (like which destination to go to next) as he drives forward through the narrative and runs through the environments.

The only actual real-time action bits are the shooting sections, which look suspiciously like a simplistic on-rails affair. This will be disappointing to many people, but we're confident that the overall experience will be quite special. Sega's *Rez*, for example, hardly boasted cutting-edge gameplay, but you can't deny its quality.

As usual, we'll keep our eyes peeled for more info over the coming months...



Δ Exploding zombie-types walking into point-blank machinegunnery...



Δ ...with hilarious consequences! Just look at all that blood. Delightful!

MARIO KART COMPETITION

WE'RE GIVING A MARIO KART AND ZELDA BONUS DISC BUNDLE AWAY FOR ONE LUCKY READER.



That's right, we're giving away a *Mario Kart* and *Zelda* bonus disc bundle, courtesy of Nintendo. We've also got a bunch of Nintendo games and goodies to send out to five runners-up. If you fancy your chances, dig out your old issues of N64 and hunt through them and answer the following question...

Way back in **N64**/1, we reviewed the Japanese *Mario Kart 64*, awarding it a healthy 91%. We want to know which N64 veteran wrote the review.

Was it:

a) James Ashton
b) Zy Nicholson
c) Jonathan Davies

Answers on a postcard to:

Who Karted?
NGC Magazine
Future Publishing
Bath
BA1 2BW

All entries will be picked at random and must reach us no later than the 19th December.

SHORT CUTS



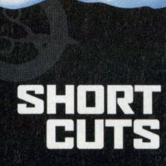
CATALOGUE?
Here are a couple of comparison pictures for you to mull over – 'food for thought' as it were. Above is the Japanese equivalent of Nintendo's Stars Catalogue. On offer is some lovely *Animal Crossing* writing paper, a nicely designed T-shirt, some desirable *Zelda* posters, a tasty green GBA SP and peppermint joypad. Now, maybe it's just us, but we wouldn't mind trading in our points for these little beauties...



SCATALOGUE!
Now take a look at the European effort. *Rayman 3* (Sold Out) anyone? How about the same mediocre platformer for GBA? No? Okay then, how about spending those hard earned points on some desktop icons and screensavers that you could *make yourself* with half a brain and a copy of *Photoshop*? Not convinced? Neither are we. We've got better prizes than that in the rubbish bin behind Kittsy's desk. Oh, Nintendo...

FANBOY FORUM AMMO
One thing we're frequently asked is what the UK figures are for all the consoles in this supposed 'war'. After repeated stabbing at the **NGC** calculator, our own figures are as follows (approx). PS2, the market leader, has a current installed base of over 1.4 million units. Xbox is running at 460,000 units while Gamecube is behind at 350,000. However, including all of Nintendo's hardware (GC, GBA + SP), the company's hardware sales clock in at an impressive 1.2 million units. So there you go.





SHORT CUTS



WE ARE THE CHUMPIONS

Nintendo's *Mario Kart* launch event in London's smart Mile End district went off without a hitch, with assorted games 'journalists' and **NGC** team members competing in a rain-soaked outdoor karting event. Because the real thing bears little or no resemblance to *Mario Kart* we took a bit of a thrashing at that, but remained confident of a win in the evening's *Double Dash* eight-player tournament. Sadly, after winning every qualifying round with ease, we were robbed of first place in the final by a complete fluke of a result, thereby proving that *Double Dash* is the most random game ever made, and knocking one mark off its final review score. But we did come home with a rather nice *Mario Kart* wrench trophy, which we're extremely proud of. In fact we're so proud of it, we really want it out of our sight as soon as possible, so we're going to give it away to one lucky reader. Simply answer the following question:

In the name of all that's good and fair, who should rightfully have won the Nintendo *Double Dash* launch championship?
a) **NGC** magazine
b) Anybody else

Email the correct answer (which is 'a') to the usual address: ngc@futurenet.co.uk subject line = Justice

THE MISSING MONSTERS

How to unlock the Pokémon hidden inside your copies of Ruby and Sapphire.



As any keen *Pokémon* player undoubtedly knows, the GBA *Ruby* and *Sapphire* games feature a grand total of 386 monsters.

However, with more than 180 of them, including most of the old favourites like Bulbasaur and Meowth being completely unobtainable, how is anyone supposed to complete the game?

The answer will be released in this country next March. *Pokémon Colosseum* for Gamecube is the companion piece to the GBA titles, enabling you to stage battles in glorious 3D, and swap monsters between the GBA cart and a Gamecube memory card.

And it has a 20-hour RPG mode which is the only place you can catch those mysterious missing creatures. Once you've collected them on the Gamecube you can download them to the GBA and finally complete your collection.

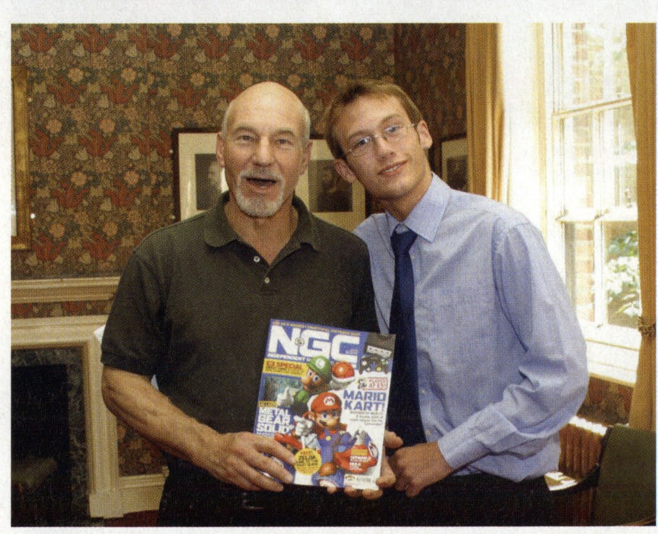








Δ Just what Pokémon enthusiasts have been gagging for – a home console RPG.



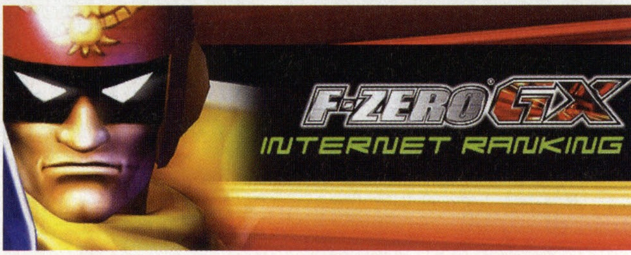
Δ Send us in your address matey, and we'll pop something 'nice' in the post.

MAKE IT SO...

See him Klingon to that magazine!



A little while ago we asked **NGC** readers to send in pictures of 'celebrities' holding a copy of **NGC** in return for a game from the 'game drawer'. Well, true to our word Adam Richardson will be just so rewarded thanks to this lovely pic of **NGC** hero, Patrick Stuart (aka Jean Luc Picard) taken in a rather posh-looking student union in Oxford University. Apparently he was a 'bloody nice chap'. Top stuff.



Δ Go on, log on and feel the wave of inadequacy hit you in the face like a brick. Drift Highway in under 50 seconds? All three laps? Riiiiiiiggggghhhhht.

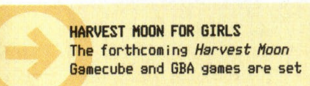
F-ZERO WORLD RANKINGS

Compare your fastest times against the best the world has to offer...

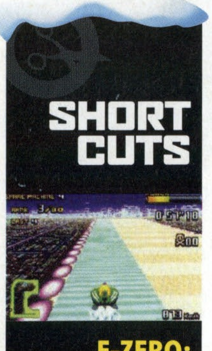


Become hopelessly addicted to *F-Zero*'s Time Attack mode yet? Managed to whip those sorry staff ghosts into shape, have we? Well now you can test your skills on the international stage. Well, kind of. On the records table for the individual cups, hold down 'Z', then press L, A, L, A, C-up, L, C-right, A, R, C-up. This will give you a code you can then enter on the Official Rankings website at: http://ranking.f-zero.jp/gxe.html

Also, for those who are interested, you can compete with fellow **NGC** readers on the gamesradar.com forums. Just look for the relevant thread (it was a sticky at the top of the list last time we checked) for more details.



HARVEST MOON FOR GIRLS
The forthcoming *Harvest Moon* Gamecube and GBA games are set to receive a special edition aimed at girls. Initially available in Japan only, the special editions feature an alternative storyline, a female lead character (you can't choose to play as a girl in the normal versions) and lots of men to chat up, which will come as very pleasing news to girl gamers (and Geraint). Also, you can really insult your male friends by getting them a copy of the pinkest, fluffiest thing on Gamecube.



F-ZERO: FALCON LEGEND

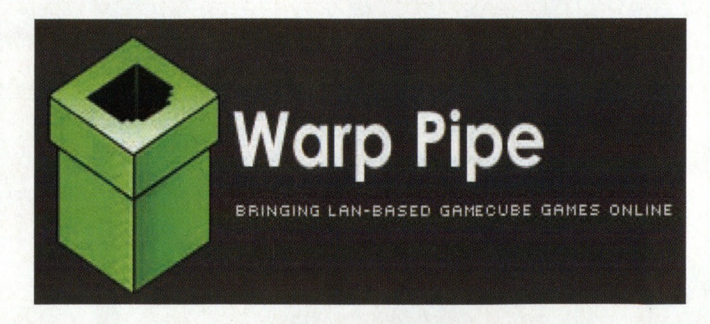
It's about time we had another F-Zero game for GBA. The last one we had came out on the GBA's launch day a couple of years back. This latest installment is based on the forthcoming anime series of the same name and will boast significantly more features than *Velocity X*, such as the ability to tweak your craft between races (something that was sorely missing last time) and more ships to unlock as well as attacking options to help you get ahead of the pack. The game is currently 80% complete, so hopefully we won't have to wait too long before it arrives…

RUMOUR: GAMECUBE HARD DRIVE?

We have a little trouble swallowing this one, to be honest, but news is news. A rumour from a reliable source in Japan has arisen, regarding the possibility of an external storage medium. This won't necessarily take the form of a hard drive, though. It's far more likely that it will take a form similar to Zip disks, enabling gamers to transfer data from a memory card and dump it into a device for retrieval at another time. The main problem we have with this rumour is 'why?' Other than memory-munching EA sports titles, few games need such a device.



△ Too good to be true? Apparently not. Warp Pipe is up and running!





△ Once we get our PC fixed we'll walk you through the set up process.

PLAY MARIO KART ONLINE!

Want to play Gamecube's finest multiplayer racer against the world…?



Back in **NGC**/84 we reported on the fledgling 'Warp Pipe Project'. Using a copy of *Kirby's Air Ride*, a Broadband adaptor, a router and a PC, a three-strong team of dedicated individuals headed up by product manager Chad Paulson strived to achieve what everyone (apart from Nintendo, it seems) always dreamed of – head-to-head online play for *Mario Kart Double Dash*.

Kirby's Air Ride was the first LAN-linkable game to become available and this was used to get the project up and running – the team duped the Gamecube into thinking it was playing over LAN when it was actually working over the internet. Now, with *Mario Kart* finally released, the project has been tweaked to the point where you, the intrepid online gamer, can take part in testing the software.

If you head over to http://www.warppipe.com, you can find more extensive details about the project and how it all works as well check out the latest version of the software, which is ready to download. On the main page you'll find the latest news about the current software, as well as FAQs and forums to help you get started, troubleshoot any connection problems you may be having or look for players to race against.

The current version (at the time of writing) is running at a remarkable 55-60 frames per second with little noticeable lag – but that's running over a university campus network. Obviously there's still a great deal of work to be done but the fact is that it *works*. Unfortunately, you're unable to chat while you race – there simply isn't the bandwidth for text, let alone voice chat – but there are plans to have some kind of user recognition system in place for a future update of the software, enabling you to recognise who you're playing against.

Also, the current software only enables two Gamecubes to be linked together (for up to eight players to race), although there are plans for a beta version which should enable up to four Gamecubes to be connected.

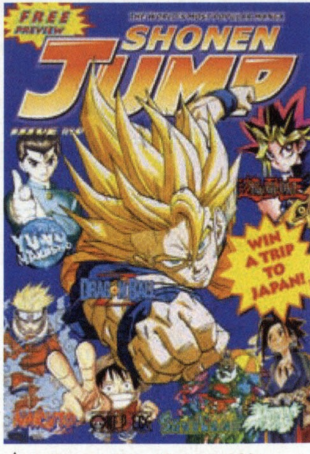


NINTENDO TO BUY BANDAI?

Could Nintendo be poised to buy the Japanese, stompy-robot toy company…

MISSILE PHALANX

△ Imagine the potential. Nintendo behind an Avalon or Patlabor…



△ …license. Now *that* would be something worth looking forward to.

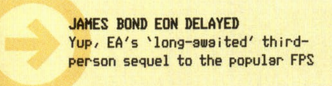


Well, no, probably not – but that didn't stop rumour-mongers speculating about Nintendo's recent purchasing decisions.

It seems that Nintendo have decided to buy 1.28 million shares in Bandai, the third largest toy company in the world. Bandai are responsible for a wide range of hugely popular franchises like the Gundam series, *Super Robot Taisen* games (these are massive in Japan) and even have their fingers in pies like Hello Kitty and the weekly anime/manga mag Shonen Jump.

This news prompted many to suspect that this was a precursor to Nintendo buying the company – something that both Bandai and Nintendo have already publicly denied. The 1.28 million shares roughly equates to about 2.5% of Bandai's stock, making Nintendo one of their biggest shareholders.

So what advantage does this give to Nintendo? Not that much, to be honest, but it may well be a clever move by Nintendo, who could be looking to secure some of Bandai's franchises for Gamecube. The likes of Mobile Suit Gundam, Cowboy Bebop and, yes, those lycra-lovin' Power Rangers, are still huge draws worldwide. If Nintendo can secure the licenses for these popular series, they will make substantial amounts of money. Just the thought of Nintendo using Bandai's anime characters in games is enough to get anyone excited. Surely.



JAMES BOND EON DELAYED
Yup, EA's 'long-awaited' third-person sequel to the popular FPS series has been pushed back to March of next year. No real word as to why exactly, but our money is on them not wanting to take sales away from the likes of *Potter* and *FIFA 2004*.

CONFLICT DESERT STORM 2
Tried looking for it, have we? Gone into the shops to pick up some simulated desert warfare? Out of luck? Well that's not surprising, really. Publishers SCi have decided to hold it back until January – so no, it hasn't 'been canned'…

VIRTUAL REALITY YOU

NINTENDO GAMING MOMENTS 'COME TRUE'.

THIS MONTH

We asked you dress as Mario on a golf course. You obliged by breaking the law.



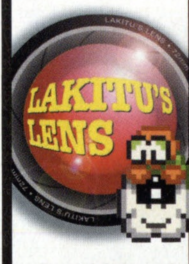
MASHIE NIBLICK

There are some things money can't buy. In the case of this gurning Norwegian on a crazy golf course in the dead of night, it's a bloody good job too. There are only two things that we can think of that could *possibly* have been done to Eskil Vestre in order to get his face contorted like that - both of which are illegal. Even in Norway.

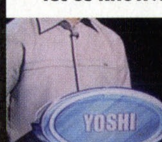


BREAK 'N' ENTER

Rex McGee from Trowbridge is clearly one of the West Country's illegal elite. His rather unique definition of 'trespassing' includes night vision and climbing over fences to access private property without permission. Well done Rex. The police should be on their way to your house round about now.



David Gosen in Battlestar Galactica? Shigsy in Wife Swap? Yamauchi on It's a Knockout? Do let us know…



YOSHI

Grant Taylor of Edinburgh managed to get a pic of the Weakest Link which, strangely, featured a man (yes, a *grown* man) who called himself Yoshi. Apparently he went out of the first round because he was 'too small'. Afterwards he gobbled up the ginger witch and shat her out in an ovulation. Well he *would* have done if we hadn't just made that bit up.

WRITE TO LAKITU'S LENS, NGC, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW

Our favourite entry (with photo or video evidence) will win a Precious Thing from our office.

FIRE EMBLEM: FINALLY!

It took its time, but it might just make it…

For years we've had to put up with Japanese-speaking gamers harping on about the brilliance that is the *Fire Emblem* series. These popular and critically acclaimed strategy RPGs, which appeared on the SNES, are thought by many to be superior to the excellent *Final Fantasy Tactics* games.

Unfortunately, not many people in the West can back up this claim because the games have never been translated into English. In fact, the closest European and American gamers have ever got to them is courtesy of *Super Smash Bros Melee,* which includes of *Fire Emblem* characters, Marth and Roy.

The games have been developed for GBA by Intelligent Systems (who are the people responsible for the outstanding GBA strategy title *Advance Wars* – a sure sign of quality if ever there was one), and as a result the main meat of the game takes on very similar, grid-based strategy style. Unlike *Advance Wars,* however, the game is much more story-driven, while the number of units and character classes available to you makes playing *Fire Emblem* a far more complicated experience.

So, the wait for an English language version of the game is finally over. *Fire Emblem* is currently available in the States, and although a European release has yet to be confirmed, it's looking increasingly likely that we'll see it over here before too long.

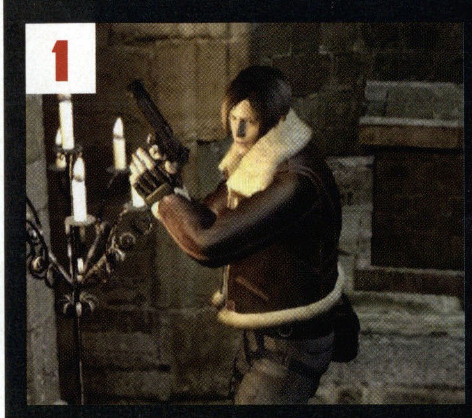



RING
SONIC
THE HEDGEHOG
SONIC BOOM!
SONIC PINBALL PARTY
THQ
SEGA
GAME BOY ADVANCE

DISAGREE WITH MOST WANTED? Then email us at **ngc@futurenet.co.uk** or write to us at **NGC**, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW and tell us the three games you're most looking forward to. Every month, we'll tally up the scores on the doors and change the list accordingly.



The games you dream about when you sleep and think about while you eat.



1 RESIDENT EVIL 4

200X?! What the hell is that all about then? After teasing us with beautiful footage of the game in action, showing gorgeous levels of detail, incredible true-3D environments and eerie ghost effects, Capcom pull the old 'X' trick on us. In other words – don't expect to see this any time soon.

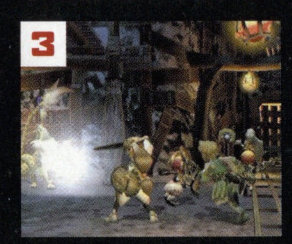
UK '200X' | US '200X' | JAPAN '200X'



2 KILLER 7

UK 2004 | US 2004 | JAPAN 2004

Seen the new videos doing the rounds, have we? Sent the link to anyone and everyone in your email address book? Hoping to dear God that it's not going to play like a super-violent *Dragon's Lair*? Join the club.



3 FINAL FANTASY: CC

UK SPRING | US SPRING | JAPAN NOW

We've decided against pushing further into the Japanese version now, which was quite a difficult decision to make seeing as it's so ruddy marvellous. Once the English language version comes out we'll go back to it with fresh eyes ready for that review…



4 DONKEY KONGA

UK 2004 | US 2004 | JAPAN XMAS

A peripheral-driven beat rhythm action game, featuring a set of bongos and monkeys. What with this, *Wario Ware GC* and the host of other four-player games already available for the Gamecube, this will surely be the party console of choice.



5 HARVEST MOON

UK SPRING | US SPRING | JAPAN WINTER

One of life's little pleasures. Tending to your crops, fishing at a nearby stream, courting the lovely ladies at your local fete and flogging your turnips for cold hard cash at the weekly market. Our love affair with Natsume's series will never die…



6 POKé COLOSSEUM

UK SPRING | US SPRING | JAPAN NOW

Your chance to catch the rest of those elusive Pokémon in, pleasingly, a Gamecube RPG-style adventure. As you'd expect, you can also link up your GBA to the game to battle your critters in lovely 3D arenas. We'll give this the full treatment in next month's issue.



7 METAL GEAR SOLID

UK MARCH | US 2004 | JAPAN 2004

The vastly superior *MGS*, combined with the beautiful *MGS2* with all its extra 'gameplay' additions, is a mouth-watering prospect indeed. Given that Kojima and Silicon Knights are at the helm, we've got a sneaking suspicion this might turn out alright.



8 PAC-MAN

UK TBA | US TBA | JAPAN WINTER

Can't you guys make up your mind? One minute you can't be bothered with it, the next you're all over it like a rash. Thankfully it's turning out to be something rather special – not to mention free. Now you can't say fairer than that…



9 METROID PRIME 2

UK TBA | US TBA | JAPAN TBA

Another of those games you can safely file away under 'Not for a couple of years'. Developers Retro Studios surprised everyone with one of the most inventive and atmospheric games of recent years. Our money's on them doing the same again…



#	Game	Comment	UK	US	JAPAN
10	1080° AVALANCHE	The connoisseur's choice.	JAN	JAN	TBA
11	PIKMIN 2	When vegetables attack…	2004	2004	2004
12	UNITY	Minter's trippy neon shooter	TBA	TBA	TBA
13	TALES OF SYMPHONIA	Lovely cel-shaded RPG.	TBA	SPRING	NOW
14	ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS	Like the GBA version but on GC	TBA	TBA	TBA
15	STAR FOX ARMADA	Namco's multiplayer shooter.	TBA	TBA	TBA
16	R: RACING EVOLUTION	*Ridge Racer*, with free Pac-Man	TBA	TBA	TBA
17	STARCRAFT GHOST	Stealthy SF action adventure.	TBA	TBA	TBA
18	SONIC HEROES	Strange team-based Sonic.	SPRING	SPRING	SPRING
19	PSO III C.A.R.D	Geraint isn't the only one then.	TBA	TBA	NOW
20	JAMES BOND: E.O.N.	Jimmy Bondalongadingdong.	SPRING	SPRING	TBA
21	MARIO PARTY 5	Oh please. Not again. Nooooo.	DEC	DEC	DEC
22	BATEN KAITOS	Very, very nice-looking RPG.	TBA	TBA	WINTER
23	BEYOND GOOD & EVIL	Another gorgeous RPG.	2004	2004	TBA
24	TETRAS TRACKERS	More multiplayer GBA link up.	2004	2004	2004
25	MARIO 128	Does this really exist? Shigsy?	TBA	TBA	TBA

WRITE TO… MAILBOX/NGC/30 MONMOUTH STREET/BATH/BA1 2BW OR EMAIL NGC@FUTURENET.CO.UK



THIS MONTH

Turn to page 20 for our hands on impressions of this four-player reworking of the retro masterpiece. Elsewhere this issue we've got more info for you on *Donkey Konga* and a *Mario Party 5* (shudder) preview on page 22…

ULTRA RELEASE LIST

The latest on every Nintendo system game in development – updated monthly!

UK RELEASES

The most accurate listing available – although be aware that slippages can occur. All titles Gamecube unless otherwise stated.

NOVEMBER

21	Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu	Ubi Soft
21	Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (GBA)	Ubi Soft
21	Disney's Brother Bear (GBA)	THQ
21	Gladius	Activision
21	Gotcha Force	Capcom
21	Mario & Luigi (GBA)	Nintendo
21	Spongebob Squarepants Bikini Bottom	THQ
21	Spongebob Squarepants Bikini Bottom (GBA)	THQ
21	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (GBA)	Konami
21	XIII	Ubi Soft
28	Beyblade Super Tournament Battle	Atari
28	1080° Avalanche	Nintendo
28	Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	EA
28	Metal Arms	Vivendi
28	Need for Speed: Underground	EA
28	The Hobbit	Vivendi
TBC	Pop Idol (GBA)	Codemasters
TBC	Premier Manager 03/04 (GBA)	Zoo
TBC	Spyro: Adventure (GBA)	Vivendi

DECEMBER

5	Crash Nitro Kart	Vivendi
5	Crash Nitro Kart (GBA)	Vivendi
5	Harry Potter & The Philosopher's Stone	EA
5	Mario Party 5	Nintendo
5	Medal of Honor Infiltrator (GBA)	EA
5	Mission: Impossible Operation Surma (GBA)	Atari
5	Rogue Ops	Capcom
5	Sonic Heroes	Sega
5	XGRA	Acclaim
12	The Sims Bustin' Out	EA
12	The Sims Bustin' Out (GBA)	EA
TBC	Archer Maclean's 3D Pool	Ignition

TBC 2003

Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu (GBA)	Ubi Soft
Extreme Force	Namco
Good Cop Bad Cop	Revolution
Good Cop Bad Cop (GBA)	Revolution
NFL Street	EA
Scary Tales	Wanadoo
Sonic Pinball Party (GBA)	Sega
Urban Freestyle Soccer	Acclaim

JANUARY 2004

TBC	Arcade Treasures	Midway

FEBRUARY 2004

TBC	Sphinx & The Cursed Mummy	THQ

MARCH 2004

5	Kirby's Air Ride	Nintendo
5	Mario Golf	Nintendo
5	Pokémon Colosseum	Nintendo
5	X-Men Legends	Activision
TBC	Boktai (GBA)	Konami
TBC	Pitfall Harry	Activision
TBC	Pitfall Harry (GBA)	Activision
TBC	Tak & The Power of JuJu	THQ
TBC	Tak & The Power of Juju (GBA)	THQ
TBC	James Bond 007 in... Everything or Nothing	EA
TBC	James Bond 007 in... (GBA)	EA

APRIL 2004

TBC	Pikmin 2	Nintendo
TBC	Full Throttle 2	Activision

MAY 2004

7	Spider-Man 2	Activision

TBC 2004

Animal Crossing 2	Nintendo
Area 51	Midway
Bad Boys II	Empire
Beyond Good & Evil	Ubi Soft
Custom Robo	Nintendo
Custom Robo GX (GBA)	Nintendo
Dead Phoenix	Capcom
Disney's Aladdin	Capcom
Donkey Konga	Nintendo
ESPionage	Midway
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles	Nintendo
Fire Emblem (GBA)	Nintendo
Game Zero (Working Title)	Zoo
Geist	Nintendo
Goblin Commander	Jaleco
Hamtaro: Rainbow Rescue (GBA)	Nintendo
Harvest Moon 2: It's a Wonderful Life	Ubi Soft
Harvest Moon 2: Friends of Mineral Town (GBA)	Ubi Soft
Justice League	Midway
Killer 7	Capcom
Mario Tennis	Nintendo
Mario Tennis (GBA)	Nintendo
Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes	Konami
Metroid Prime 2	Nintendo
Metroid: Zero Mission (GBA)	Nintendo
Mission: Impossible Operation Surma	Atari
Mario & Donkey Kong (GBA)	Nintendo
Mortal Kombat 6	Midway
The Movies	Activision
NARC	Midway
NHL Hitz Pro	Midway
Nightmare Creatures	Ubi Soft
Pac-Man	Nintendo/Namco
Phantasy Star Online Episode III: C.A.R.D. Revolution	Sega
Pokémon Channel	Nintendo
Prince of Persia	Ubi Soft
R: Racing Evolution	Namco
Resident Evil 4	Capcom
Roadkill	Midway
Robocop	Avalon
Shining Force (GBA)	Sega
Shining Soul 2 (GBA)	Sega
Sonic Advance 3 (GBA)	Sega
Sonic Battle (GBA)	Sega
Spawn	Namco
Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubi Soft
Spy Hunter 2	Midway
Starcraft: Ghost	Vivendi
Star Fox 2	Nintendo
Super Mario 128	Nintendo
Sword of Mana (GBA)	Nintendo
Tales of Symphonia	Namco
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Konami
Unity	Lionhead
Zelda: Tetra's Trackers	Nintendo
Zelda: The Four Swords	Nintendo

US RELEASES

The most important US releases. Fancy importing one?





DECEMBER

4	1080° Avalanche	Nintendo
4	Pokémon Colosseum	Nintendo
12	R: Racing Evolution	Namco

JANUARY 2004

18	Harvest Moon A Wonderful Life	SVG

FEBRUARY 2004

12	Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles	Nintendo
18	Starcraft: Ghost	Blizzard
18	The Suffering	Midway

MARCH 2004

5	Metal Gear: Twin Snakes	Konami

TBC 2004

Donkey Konga	Namco/Nintendo
Killer 7	Capcom
Mario Tennis	Nintendo
Metroid Prime 2	Nintendo
Mortal Kombat 6	Midway
Pikmin 2	Nintendo
Phantasy Star Online Episode III: C.A.R.D. Revolution	Sega
Starfox 2	Namco/Nintendo
Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubi Soft
Resident Evil 4	Capcom

JAP RELEASES

The best future Japanese releases. Crazy great fun.





NOVEMBER

21	Mickey to Donald no Magical Quest 3 (GBA)	Capcom
21	Pokémon Colosseum	Nintendo
27	Gotcha Force	Capcom
27	Phantasy Star Online Episode I & II Plus	Sega
27	Phantasy Star Online Episode III: C.A.R.D. Revolution	Sega
27	R: Racing Evolution	Namco

DECEMBER

2	Rockman EXE 4 Blue Moon (GBA)	Capcom
2	Rockman EXE 4 Red Sun (GBA)	Capcom
4	Crash Bandicoot 4	Konami
4	Sonic Battle (GBA)	Sega
5	Baten Kaitos	Namco
11	Momotarou Dentetsu 12	Hudson
12	Harry Potter to Kenja no Ishi	EA
18	DreamMix TV: World Fighters	Konami
TBC	Donkey Konga	Nintendo

TBC 2003

Mario & Donkey Kong (GBA)	Nintendo
Mario Party 5	Nintendo
Metal Gear: The Twin Snakes	Konami

THESE JUST OUT!

Missed last issue? Here's NGC's pick of the freshest games around…



SSX3
NGC/87 ■ 89%

This huge, sprawling and free roaming 'boarder may not be without its faults, but it's certainly an exhilarating ride.



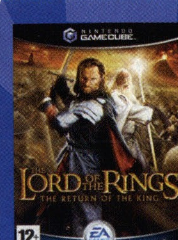
SIMPSONS HIT AND RUN
NGC/87 ■ 80%

When *GTA3* and the Simpsons collide, this is the result. By far the best Simpsons game ever made.



BILLY HATCHER
NGC/87 ■ 86%

From the creators of Sonic comes a boy dressed in a chicken suit. Quality egg-rolling action.



LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
NGC/87 ■ 86%

More hackin' 'n' slashin', this time with improved visuals and a great co-op mode. Fantastic stuff.

WARNING! GAMES SNEAKING OUT WITHOUT NGC REVIEWS…

It's not often that we're prevented from playing review code prior to a game's release, but this month it's happened on three occasions. Draw your own conclusions…



1080º AVALANCHE

More realistic than *SSX3* – and hopefully more fun too. Or maybe not… don't buy it yet, eh?



MARIO PARTY 5

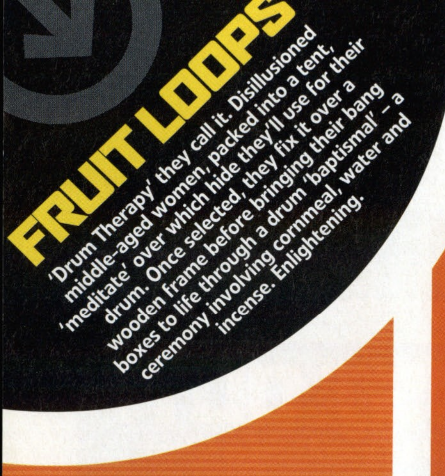
Lets hope Hudson can come up with something better than tedious boards and rehashes of old minigames…



CRASH RACING

Lets face it, you've got *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!* so there's little point in bothering with this.

ISSUE 89 WILL CARRY FULL REVIEWS ■ ON SALE 17TH DECEMBER



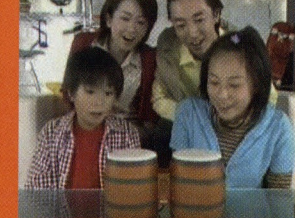
FRUIT LOOPS

'Drum Therapy' they call it. Disillusioned middle-aged women, packed into a tent, 'meditate' over which hide they'll use for their drum. Once selected, they fix it over a wooden frame before bringing their bang boxes to life through a drum 'baptismal' – a ceremony involving cornmeal, water and incense. Enlightening.

ADS MAGIC

A Japanese advert shows four members of a family taking part in the game. It clearly shows all members clapping and bongoing their way through one of the game's tunes – with the bongo action reaching manic speeds. Golden.









THE KNOWLEDGE

- Beat-rhythm action using a set of bongos as a controller.
- Created by Namco, the developers responsible for another excellent drum game (for PS2) called *Taiko no Tetsujin*.
- Features multiple songs across a wide range of genres. These will, most likely, be changed for Western release.
- Multiplayer modes will allow you to hook up multiple bongos. Alternatively, four players can play with just the one set.



△ Could those extra boxes be spaces to hold three extra players? From the advertisement (see above) we wouldn't rule out the possibility.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Namco

What have they done before?
Soul Calibur 2 (NGC/85, 92%)
Until *Mario Kart* arrived, this was the most-played game in the **NGC** office.

DONKEY KONGA

Move over King Louie – this ape's the real king of the swingers.



The more we see of this, the more we want. You'd be hard pushed to get excited over it if you were to judge the game from these shots, though. Pictures of lines, dots and tic-infested apes hardly make for an enticing gaming prospect – but this isn't your common-or-garden slice of Kong. It's an all-singing, all-dancing beat-rhythm frenzy that'll doubtless win over the hearts of even the most cynical gamers.

To start with it doesn't use a Gamecube joypad. Instead, Namco (who Nintendo are entrusting this game to) are packing the game with a set of 20 x 30cm plastic bongos. Inside these drums there's a small microphone that can pick up the sounds of clapping hands. The game revolves around your skill in matching the beats of the game's peculiar selection of songs by slapping the required side of the bongo and clapping in time.

So, how does it all work? As you can see from these shots, you have a 'timeline' that runs the length of the screen and an action point at one end. Along the timeline are a number of icons that steadily scroll across from right to left. These icons are colour-coded to let you know what you should be doing when they hit the action point on the left. A red icon tells you to hit the right-hand bongo and a yellow icon tells you to hit the left bongo, for example. Meanwhile other icons let you know which side of which bongo you have to hit or, in some





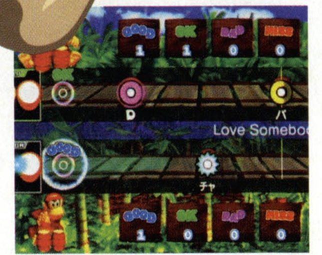








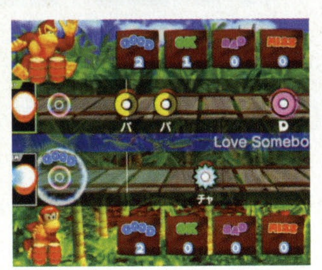
△ From what we've seen, only Diddy and Donkey appear on the side of the screen. Whether or not we'll see Cranky and the rest of Rare's hideous creations appear remains to be seen…



△ We sincerely hope that the game will allow up to four bongos to be…



△ …hooked up for multiplayer mayhem. It'll cost a fair bit, though.



△ As you hit the bongos in time to the tunes, Donkey Kong and…



△ …Diddy Kong jig about. Doubtless, they'll improve their dancing as you improve the timing of your hits. The Good-Miss scale certainly implies this.

WHAT THE?

Yes, this is odd. The finished game will have a number of different modes of play, but this doesn't seem to fit in with any kind of rhythm action that we can think of. Do you really have to drum your way through the jungle collecting fruit? Could Namco's bongos be used as a directional input of some sort? Intriguing…

cases, to wallop both at the same time. You're also required to clap too, while an elongated icon requires you to bash your bongo, rapid-fire-style, for all the time it takes to pass through the action point.

It's cracking entertainment, but it really comes into its own when you have plenty of people to play with. Multiple players can even play on one bongo, with a clapping audience also able to participate in the fun. Get in some more bongos and you'll be in for a session of rhythmic duelling of epic proportions.

In recent years, the only game of this type that ever got our dancing juices flowing was Dreamcast's *Samba de Amigo*, a maraca-based rhythm-action title that was almost ungodly in its instant appeal. Given that Sonic Team's Yuji Naka has no plans to update it for another console, it looks like *Donkey Konga* will be the only title that can offer the same kind of thrills.

> **"GET SOME MORE BONGOS AND YOU'LL BE IN FOR A SESSION OF RHYTHMIC DUELLING"**

NGC VERDICT

We're not entirely convinced by the Japanese track listing, to be perfectly honest. You will never see Kittsy, for example, beating his bongo in time to Japanese nursery rhyme 'Clarinet no Kowashichatta'. Thankfully, it's a near certainty that the music will be updated to suit Western tastes a little better.







UK TBC | US TBC | JAPAN DECEMBER

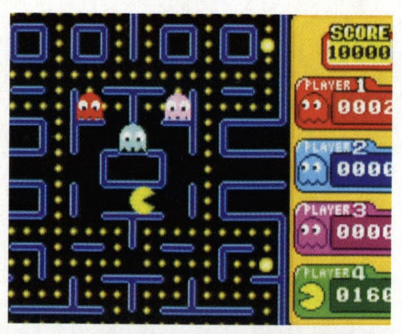








△ Once Pac-Man has been caught, the person playing the successful ghost becomes Le Pac.



△ The Pac-Man player sees the whole screen on their GBA, enabling him to dodge ghosts.



△ Ghost players, though, only get a limited field of vision on the TV. Co-operation's the key.



THE KNOWLEDGE

- Classic *Pac-Man* action re-invented for four players.
- Uses GBA link-up technology. Pac-Man players use the GBA for a full view of the action. Three more players use the television to play as ghosts.
- Nintendo and Namco have confirmed their intention to give the game away free with various Namco titles in the US and Japan.



△ It looks very basic – one of the 'issues' that made many people look down their noses at Shigsy and Namco's little project. Some people never learn.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Namco

What have they done before?
Soul Calibur 2 (NGC/85, 92%)
One on one weapon-based fighting masterpiece. Now with added Rinky Dink.



PAC-MAN VS

Four times the players, four times the fun. Shigsy's pet project's gonna be a real winner.

If there's one thing that *everyone* wants to know at E3 every year, it's "What has Shigsy been working on?" and 'What delight is he going to wheel out on stage next?" This year the answer dumbfounded everyone at Nintendo's press conference. Ninty's resident game governor had been working on… TADA-DA-DA-DA-DA! *Pac-Man*. Yes, the 22-year-old pill muncher. Heads were shaken. Worried glances were exchanged. Had the videogame industry's generously haired innovator lost the plot? Of course not. *Pac-Man Vs* does things *differently*.

Having played the newly revamped classic a fair bit now, we have to admit that we're starting to fall in love with it. The simple fact that the ghosts are now controlled by human intelligence gives this ancient title a whole new lease of life. The three players who control said ghosts use the television and a very small field of vision. Co-operation and communication is the key to slowly closing the net on the Pac-Man player, who, through a GBA link-up, has a full view of the entire level on their small screen.

It's one of those games that makes all players violently vocal, shouting commands as the ghosts get near to winning, and shrieking in panic as Pac-Man power-pills his way onto the offensive – the air turns blue.

If this gets released for free in the UK, then we'll be very, *very* happy.

> **"WE HAVE TO ADMIT IT, WE'RE STARTING TO FALL IN LOVE WITH PAC MAN VS..."**

NGC VERDICT

It might not look like much on paper, but to play *Pac-Man Vs* is to truly understand its beauty. Yes, it's a bit like playing tag, and for most developers it'd be hard to breathe life into such a basic idea twinned with an ageing game. Not for Namco, guided by the hand of Shigsy. Another game that can't come soon enough, we reckon…






UK TBC | US 2004 | JAPAN WINTER



ANTICIPATION RATING






1 2 3 **4** 5



DID YOU KNOW? *Pac-Man* is the best-selling coin-op game in history – shifting well over 100,000 machines around the world in its first year on sale.





THE KNOWLEDGE

- More than 60 new minigames.
- The return of Mario, Luigi, Wario, Daisy, Yoshi – plus a selection of brand new playable party-goers (including Toad, Boo and the Koopa Kids).
- The chance to compete in new duals, traditional duals or take part in everyone against Bowser minigames.
- All-new game boards.



△ All-new boards. Let's hope they're better than last year's disappointing efforts.



△ There's more than 60 new minigames. We hope they *feel* new.



FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Hudson

What have they done before?
Er… Mario Party 1, 2, 3 & 4 (MP4 – NGC/75, 68%)
Doesn't move the formula on at all. It has lots to offer, but just hasn't evolved.

MARIO PARTY 5

You know the drill by now. It's Christmas. It's 'fun' for all the family.

Let's face it, things aren't looking good for *Mario Party*. Despite it being the traditional Christmas release from Nintendo – last year's *4* arriving in time for the festive season – it doesn't tend to generate much good cheer around these parts. We've got *Mario Kart* now – that's all we need for a bit of post-deadline multiplayer therapy. Why'd we need a video boardgame stinking up the place again?

Well, for one thing – you've guessed it – the game's been improved. Or *changed*, at least. The idea hasn't altered since the first games on the N64 – travel around a board by rolling a dice. Land on a Versus space and a minigame appears, in which you take on the other characters with the idea of winning some coins. When someone then reaches a star, they can buy it. A new star appears, more minigames are played and so on. The character with the most stars at the end of the game wins. It's a game designed with multiplayer in mind, and Party mode's where you'll find yourself spending most of your time with three other friends. Of course you'll be able to get involved with Mini-Game mode (once you've started unlocking the minigames in Party and Story mode), Super Duel mode (where you can use fighting machines in a battle arena) or indulge in the likes of ice hockey or volleyball in Bonus mode.

"WE'VE GOT MARIO KART NOW – WHY'D WE NEED TO PLAY A VIDEO BOARDGAME AGAIN?"

The Story mode – designed with the lonely gamer in mind – focuses on Bowser's Koopa Kids, three of which he's sent into the Dream Worlds to muck with everyone's



△ Now this reeks of the Kong family. *Reeks* of it. Is there no escaping him? The race to climb to the top of a beanstalk (see above) looks far less random. Just you, your friends and a 'stalk. Brilliant.

△ Go on Yoshi – fall off. We want to see you in clutching your body in pain…

MINI ME

The 60 or so minigames seem as varied as ever. On one you'll collect berries your partner fires down at you from a tree, on another you'll find yourself rolling a huge ball around trying to squash the Koopa Kid Brigade. The one where you're trying to dodge penguins while balancing on an ice block looks a scream…

dreams. You're asked by the Star Guards to put an end to their meddling. Cue six worlds (boards) in which you have 20 turns to make the Koopa Kid Brigade lose all their coins. They take their turns simultaneously, which'll help cut down on the amount of frustrating waiting you'll have to put up with. We criticised the last game for having an annoying Story mode – the computer controlled characters being a little random in their abilities. We're hopeful Hudson will have sorted this out now (this is their fifth attempt to get things right).

So, new boards, minigames, challenges, characters and more are waiting for you in Gamecube's second *Party*. To be honest, you're really going to have to be a huge multiplayer fan to seriously be up for it – we still can't see the single-player Story mode holding your attention for long. But, hey, at least you get to be Toad again…

> **"KOOPA KIDS TAKE THEIR TURNS SIMULTANEOUSLY, CUTTING DOWN ON WAIT TIME"**

NGC VERDICT

More of the same, only *slightly different*… We're confident *Mario Party 5* will be better than last year's game, but exactly how much better is unclear (we're still waiting for final review code, see…). It hits the streets before our review (next issue) – if you can hold out until then, you never know, we could save you £40…



UK 5 DEC | US NOW | JAPAN 28 NOV

ANTICIPATION RATING

1 2 **3** 4 5



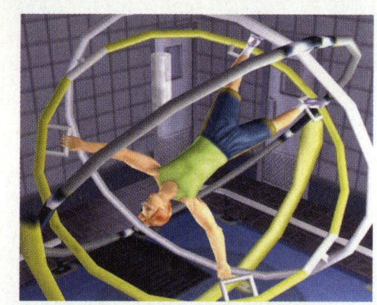
EVERY OTHER NEW GAME THAT MATTERS – EVERY SINGLE MONTH!

ROUNDUP

THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT



△ **Generous pixellation masks hideous embarrassment. Lucky that, eh? Mmm.**



△ **Look – you can even visit the NGC office. Geraint loves his GyroGym.**



After working up a sweat with *Soul Calibur 2* and blowing out the cobwebs with a stressful burn through *Mario Kart* unlocking *everything*, you'll be in need of a sit down (well, you'll probably already be sitting down, but you know what we mean). EA's sequel to the addictive original – only released in April – sees your Sims given the freedom of the town, with the chance to work and relax outside of your home.

Naturally the game's swollen with new features and enhancements. There are over 100 new objects and social moves, for instance. French kissing? Breakdancing? Belching in someone else's face? Yeah, we're all big fans – and now you can try them out in the game. You'll be able to take your Sims down to Club Rubb for a bit of a dance, guide them towards the Love Shack, get them into the gym or visiting the art gallery. And you'll need to get involved with more than 40 new characters, such as Bling Bling and Mona Lott (their personalities should be evident from their names…) if you're going to unlock new items and finish the game.

It's good to feed your Gamecube a balanced diet. We reckon *Bustin' Out* should be the perfect accompaniment to more full-on Christmas fayre…

Unleashed on 12th December



JUDGE DREDD DREDD VS DEATH



He is the law. He's also a little late. Originally due to launch alongside the other 'next gen' console versions that are already out there, word on the mean streets is that the Gamecube version won't arrive until 5th December. Rebellion's first-person shooter take on the 2000AD legend sees the future-pig taking on perps, vampires, the undead (see shot above) and worse in Mega-City One. The game packs a two-player co-op mode as well as the usual array of 4-way multiplayer stages.

Grud on a Greenie! 5th December?

ITALIAN PLUMBER SPECIAL

GBA ROUNDUP



△ **In one bit of the game Bowser's guards take you on in a… skipping competition. C'mon guys…**



△ **Combat is turn-based (as opposed to urn-based, which'd be stupid). Time your button presses well…**

MARIO & LUIGI SUPERSTAR SAGA



Anyone who's played *Paper Mario* on the N64 will feel a little at home with Mario and Luigi's first RPG for Game Boy Advance. It shares a similar look and sees the Italian pair involved in a quest that has you solving puzzles and fighting enemies (there's no random battles here though, which is *a good thing*). The emphasis is on teamwork, naturally, with special moves that see the duo standing on each other's shoulders.

On sale 24th November

1080° AVALANCHE









△ ***Avalanche*** **is less OTT than** ***SSX3*****, set in more 'realistic' environments and with less elaborate trick obstacles. But the handling is pure arcade in style. A confusing mix?**

Sometimes we're just not happy to deliver a verdict on a game if we haven't been given enough opportunity to test it thoroughly enough (call us old fashioned, but we just feel it's unhealthy to flick out snap judgements on a title it's taken a team three years or more to put together). When titles like *1080°* arrive bang on the magazine's deadline, the wise decision's to save the analysis until the next issue – particularly when it's in need of careful comparison to the stunning *SSX3*. So, if you can hold out buying it right now (*Mario Kart* should certainly keep you going for the next four weeks at least…) you can sleep easy in the knowledge that very next issue of **NGC** will carry *the* definitive verdict.

Out 28th November



△ **There just aren't enough tortoises in videogames these days. Name the last one. Go on.**

WARIO WARE INC.

Our stick-wielding Production Editor Mim has just discovered the minigame delights of *Wario Ware* on GBA for her long train journey to and from NGC Towers. She's discovered it so much, her neck hurts. We have no idea the effect the recent Japanese release of *Atsumare! Made in Wario* – the Gamecube version of *Wario Ware* – will have on her brain and body.

This time round, we can all share in the pleasure/pain though – *Wario Ware's* gone multiplayer. Nintendo have taken the minigames from the original, added a selection of new ones and given the whole thing some head-to-head energy.

On one game for instance, players take turn working through nine minigames – the other players get to move their characters around to block the current competitor's view. On another they get to control spotlights to help or hinder the existing player's view of a minigame, while there's one which sees everyone pumping up a balloon – the player involved with a minigame when the balloon explodes loses. Superb.

Out now in Japan – UK release TBC

MARIO GOLF ADVANCE TOUR

The Game Boy Color version of *Mario Golf* hit the UK in October 1999 – its GBA sequel's due early next year, on the same day as *Toadstool Tour* hits the Gamecube in fact. Hook the GBA version up to the 'Cube and you can use the 'human' characters you've worked with on the GBA game in *Toadstool Tour* (we've seen a boy and girl in action in both). We're a little doubtful as to how many people will take this up, but hey…

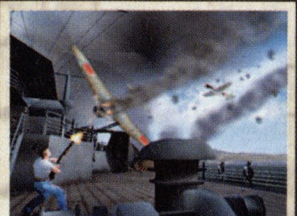
Out 5th March 2004



△ **It's always odd seeing a 'non Nintendo' character in a landscape filled with Piranha Plants.**



△ **The same character in the GBA shot at work in** ***Mario Golf*** **on Gamecube. Nice Top Spin.**











GAME BOY ADVANCE ™

Connect the Game Boy Advance™ to the NINTENDO GAMECUBE™ for an interactive strategy guide to game levels ahead.

ALOHA ALSO MEANS GOODBYE.

Pearl Harbor. Sunday December 7, 1941.

Welcome to paradise, soldier.
Fight for your life from the bowels of the USS California to the machine gun mount on a PT boat as Battleship Row burns around you. If you survive, embark on an island-hopping string of nightmares, which will continue across the Pacific – from Guadalcanal to the River Kwai and the Philippines.

You Don't Play, You Volunteer.™





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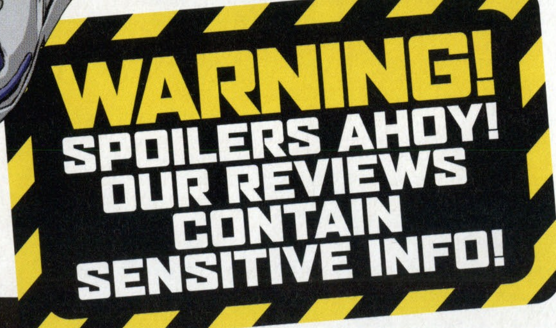
NGC THE VERDICT YOU DESERVE!

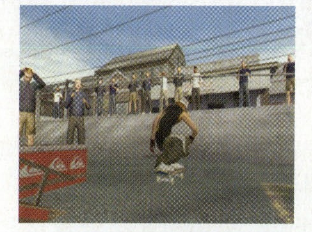
REVIEWS



MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH!!

There aren't many games where, once they arrive in the office, all work stops. Even for those journalists working on PlayStation 2 magazines. This is one of them. It all kicks off here… **P30**





TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND

It's (sort of) new, and it's definitely improved (in some areas). But we can't help feeling this just doesn't try hard enough. Have a read… **P52**



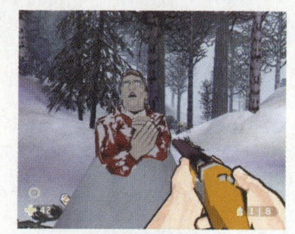
TRUE CRIME

The nearest thing to *GTA* on Gamecube hits the mean streets of Britain right about now. We've got the first independent review and we don't pull any punches. **P56**



REBEL STRIKE

Damn it all to Darth Maul, why isn't this *better*? For several reasons really, most of them involving prancing about on foot rather than razzing about in a starfighter… **P68**



XIII

One of the most ambitious shooters ever attempted. Looks *stunning* – but is it truly essential? Find out. **P50**

ALSO REVIEWED

HARRY POTTER QUIDDITCH WORLD CUP P54
BATMAN RISE OF SIN TZU P62
GLADIUS P64
THE HOBBIT P66
BEYBLADE P72
NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND P74
NBA LIVE 2004 P78
GBA REVIEWS P80

HOW IT WORKS...

Our reviews are the most comprehensive on Earth. We devote more pages to the games you want to know about, and give you loads of detail. We don't rest until we've played a game enough to pinpoint ALL of its strengths and weaknesses, and be able to deliver the most honest, no-nonsense verdicts around.



METAL ARMS

This winter's sleeper hit? Not much noise has been made about Vivendi's entertaining robot death-'em-up, and we'd like to know why. P46



MEDAL OF HONOR

Frontline was a disappointment – once you got past the tremendous opening sequence. Have EA listened to us, though..? P58

OUR SCORING SYSTEM

0-24

■ Crushingly awful, massively dull. Rest assured, this is crud.

25-49

■ Disappointing, stashed with faults and likely to be short on any quality.

50-74

■ Some great bits, some not-so-great bits. Decent but definitely problems.

75-89

■ Great fun, brilliantly programmed at times, but probably flawed.

90+

NGC STAR GAME

■ Rarely awarded, you'll know a 90+ is essential. Buy with confidence...

THE SCORE BAR

■ The verdict explained for you...

PROS AND CONS

Because we think it's important to provide you with balanced reviews, we'll sum up the game simply with some plus and minus points.

+
- ■ Presents.
- ■ Time off school/work.
- ■ Play GC all day!



- ■ Relatives.
- ■ Frigid temperatures.
- ■ TV.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Not all games are good (unsurprisingly) – so you'll be wanting to know what the alternative is. We'll provide suggestions here.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Birthday
Bunsoft
NGC/0898, 79%
More focused pleasure than *Christmas*. Shorter loading times as well – bonus!



VISUALS AND SOUNDS

Gamecube sends PS2 packing. Do the visuals and sounds show this?

MASTERY

How well does the game make use of the Cube's startling hardware?

LIFESPAN

Will it last you a lifetime or a couple of minutes? Here you'll find out for sure...

8 VISUALS
Geraint's chestnuts roasting – it brings a tear to the eye...

2 SOUNDS
Lots of seasonal shouting on EastEnders. Nice.

10 MASTERY
There's no escaping it – no, there really isn't. Top marks.

2 LIFESPAN
Only a couple of days to endure then it all goes back to normal.

VERDICT

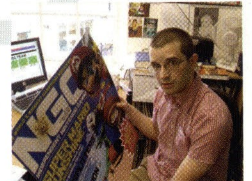
We don't throw scores around – we give a game what it deserves. Here you will find the definitive verdict as to whether you should bother purchasing a game.

VERDICT
It's a great idea in principal is *Christmas*, but we can't help feeling it'll leave you bloated and grumpy.

NGC 67

MEET THE NGC TEAM

Huddled under the NGC duvet, staring at the smoking fireplace... waiting...



MARCUS

This Christmas, Marcus will be force-feeding celebrity pensioners. Brian Blessed, Rolf Harris, Michael Caine – to name more than two.



PAUL

His wants list is impressive: 14 bottles of port, a crate of broken biscuits, a subscription to TV Quick and a dinner for two. He loves life!



KITTSY

Martin doesn't believe in tradition. Ritual, yes. But not tradition. Which is why he'll be working Christmas day. In our stinking basement/lab...



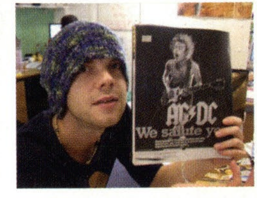
GERAINT

Normally celebrating Xmas as only a Welshman knows how – with a brace of crows and a jug of brine – Geraint's happy to 'put up' with our turkey.



MIM-TENDO

Woah! Now that's some makeover. No, hang on. That's someone else. That's, er... Vicki. Mim-tendo's off on holiday, see. She 'ates Xmas.



NICK

For one time only – it's Nick! Normally we'd have our chirpy Mexican chum Effy here, but he wants to celebrate the season alone. Eating shrimps.


IT'S HERE!
Mario Kart Double Dash should have been out and about in a game store near you for a couple of days now, but due to the strange quirks of fate that are NGC magazine's deadlines and Nintendo's admirable decision to go for a near-simultaneous worldwide release, this is the earliest opportunity we've had to bring you a full review of the 100% complete PAL version. So here it is. Enjoy!

MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH!!

Get ready for some serious road rage with Nintendo's long-awaited karting revival.



After seeing the very first glimpse of a Gamecube *Mario Kart* at Nintendo's Spaceworld 2000 show, the world was buzzing with gossip and speculation.

Would it be just a nicer looking version of the N64 game? Would it play more like the original SNES version? Would it be dumbed down for a younger audience? Toughened up for the long-term fans? Would Sonic be in it? And won't that ultra-realistic *Zelda* be the most incredible thing ever?

Plenty has changed since then, but whether or not Nintendo has delivered the *Mario Kart* of your dreams, it's obvious that the company has an extraordinary amount of pride and confidence in *Double Dash*. After all, the last Nintendo game to receive a near-simultaneous worldwide release was *Ocarina of Time* for the N64.

And because of that speedy release schedule, there's every chance that you're reading this in between races on your very own PAL, UK, 60Hz-compatible copy.

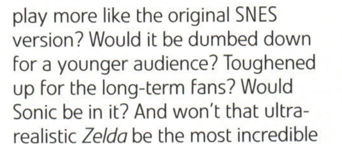
So you know what you think of it by now. And having spent, at the time of writing, the best part of three weeks playing it, we know what we think of it too. Here's hoping you're loving it as much as we have been…

"HERE'S HOPING YOU'RE LOVING DOUBLE DASH AS MUCH AS WE HAVE BEEN…"



INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	NINTENDO
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-16
MEMORY CARD PAGES	3
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40



NGC STAR GAME

TAG TEAMS

Mix and match your favourite Mushroom Kingdom characters (and Diddy Kong).

THE MARIOS





TYPE: Medium
Mario & Luigi are the characters of choice for the indecisive driver.

SPECIAL ITEM: Fireballs
Five hot shots that bounce along the road and rebound off one wall before fizzling out. Takes out pretty much everything up ahead, including dropped items.

ANNOYINGNESS: Low
The computer won't mess you up too badly with these fellas. Mario's pacifist nature shines when racing in GP mode.

THE LADIES





TYPE: Medium
Very similar to the Mario brothers, with the same choice of vehicles.

SPECIAL ITEM: Lucky hearts
Effectively a shield against anything thrown or dropped at you. Works even when Peach or Daisy are in the front seat, and lasts until you've hit a certain number of items. It's well worth having one of these two in your team setup.

ANNOYINGNESS: Non-existent
When racing against the computer the last characters you can expect to see blasting past you on the finish line or lobbing stuff into your path will be the impeccably polite members of the Mushroom Kingdom royal family.



YOSHI & BIRDO





TYPE: Medium
More characters that can fit into the same wide range of karts. By default they each drive a vehicle designed to look like their own hideous faces.



SPECIAL ITEM: Eggs
Just a slower version of a red shell, albeit with the bonus power of rolling down hills if dropped out of the back of the kart, and smashing into (sometimes very useful) items upon impact. If you get a star or two out of these you can count yourself lucky.

ANNOYINGNESS: Fair
Yoshi and Birdo don't get involved all that much when together, but form some pretty horrendous partnerships with the likes of Bowser and King Boo. Watch out for flying eggs and yelping noises.

THE BABIES





TYPE: Light
You'll have to wait until you've unlocked some special vehicles before Baby Mario and Baby Luigi can drive anything with the kind of weight you need to avoid getting hopelessly barged around at the start of a 150cc Grand Prix. But they don't slow down quite as much as other characters when going across rough terrain.

ANNOYINGNESS: Fair
Just try getting out of the way of them…

SPECIAL ITEM: Chain Chomp
Not much you can do to control this, or avoid it if you're on the receiving end. It's a combination of traffic-clearing battering ram and wild turbo boost. Beware of where it dumps you…



LEST WE FORGET…

There are two extra pairs of characters to find. Of course you'll have already located them by now, right?



TOAD & FRIEND

Win all the standard 100cc cups to unlock the super-boosting Toad and Toadette. They get to use golden mushrooms for tip-top speeds.



PETEY & THE BOO

Heavy characters who drive around in drainpipes. They get everyone else's special weapons at random, and are unlocked via mirror mode.

KOOPA TROOPERS







■ **TYPE:** Light
Once again, these characters drive the kind of karts that stick to the road like glue but don't have the ballsiness to compete at the highest level. Wait until you've unlocked some better vehicles.

■ **SPECIAL ITEM:** Triple shells
Red or green varieties. If you get green ones you won't be too chuffed, but a handful of triple red shells can easily ensure victory, particularly if you're already running near the front.

■ **ANNOYINGNESS:** Tiny
You'll barely notice they're competing in the same race in a Grand Prix game. Their special weapons are rarely in evidence, which is something to be thankful for.

THE KONGS





■ **TYPE:**
Heavy/Light
Donkey is the big, solid one. Diddy is the small, evil one. Pick them according to the type of kart you prefer driving. Diddy is in the Baby Mario category, while Donkey matches up with Bowser and Wario.

■ **SPECIAL ITEM:** Bananas
These are no ordinary bananas – they're massive things, with tiny bananas inside (to get you again on the next lap). Incredibly irritating and hard to avoid.

■ **ANNOYINGNESS:** High
Not simply because of the weapons, although those bananas are mighty bad. But because of Diddy's face, and the nasty screeching noises he likes to make. Somebody shoot that monkey.

BOWSER & SON





■ **TYPE:**
Heavy/Light
Bowser only fits in the very biggest karts, and his smaller counterpart has to be paired with another light character to make use of his particular vehicle type.

■ **ANNOYINGNESS:** High
Wait until you're happily pottering along in first place, only to run straight into a shell the size of a barn.

■ **SPECIAL ITEM:** Shells
Placed on certain areas of the track, these are impossible to avoid. They're ridiculously big.

WAH!





■ **TYPE:** Heavy/Medium
Wario's large posterior means he can't fit into anything other than cars specially reinforced to carry wide loads. Waluigi slots into Mario's all-rounder category.

■ **SPECIAL ITEM:** Bob-ombs
Hard to tell if these are on a timer or a proximity fuse. Maybe it's a bit of both. Whatever, they make vast explosions that can take out the entire chasing pack of racers or, more likely, blow up in your face when you drive past the one you've just thrown.

■ **ANNOYINGNESS:** High
There's really no need for a weapon this powerful, and the computer uses it all the time. Nasty business.



I'LL TAKE THE HIGH MODE

Five of the best parts of Double Dash, just in case your cat ate the instruction book or something.

GRAND PRIX



Just you against the computer. Or to be more precise, you against seven computer racers, each 100% committed to messing you up rather than racing properly among themselves. Yes, the computer is still a cheating traggot-jockey.

TIME TRIAL



There's loads of potential for improving your race times and getting the most perfect three laps imaginable. You only get two turbo mushrooms, for some reason, but you can save ghosts at a cost of five memory card pages each.

CO-OP GRAND PRIX



If the Grand Prix mode proves a bit too frustrating (and the epic All Cup Tour can be evil) you should enlist a friend as your split-screen bodyguard. He can take out the computer rivals for you, plus there are fewer obstacles on the tracks.

VERSUS GRAND PRIX



The best bit, as far as we're concerned. There's nothing like hammering your mates in a straight race around one of the many great circuits on offer, and the customisable item boxes add hope for the less talented players.

VERSUS BATTLE



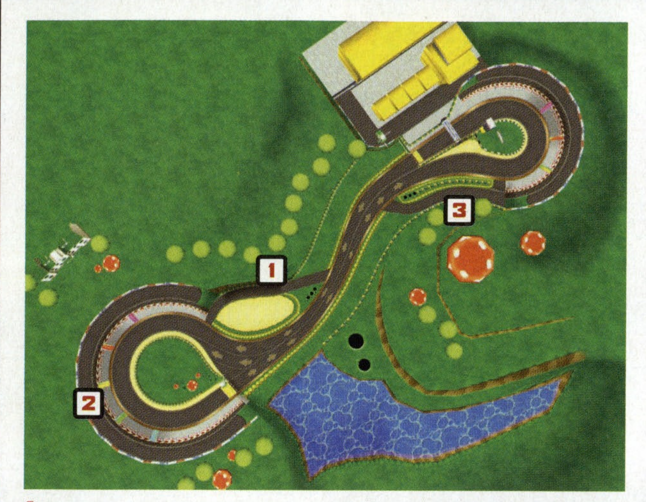
If ordinary racing isn't really your thing, you can throw a handful of weird and wonderful battle games into your multiplayer session. There are three to choose from, as detailed on page 39, and they're more than mere bonus modes.

MUSHROOM CUP

Your easy introduction to the way of the kart

LUIGI CIRCUIT

Difficulty ★★★★★





1. Speed down this filter road to grab some double item boxes. Not available in 50cc mode, for some reason.

2. Expert use of the corner turbo and the boost zones here can slingshot you around this sweeping bend.

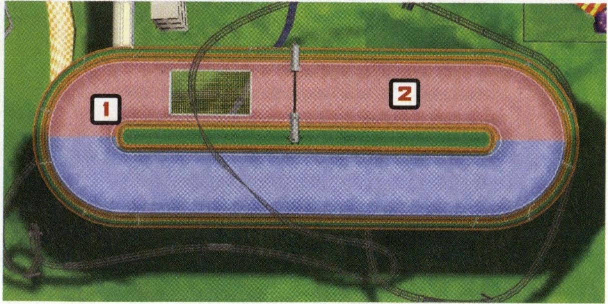
3. More double item boxes to collect here, although the tight entrance to the road can sometimes mess you up.

BABY PARK

Difficulty ★★★★★









1. It doesn't get much simpler than this. Two corners, lap times under ten seconds. You can lap the entire field if you're good enough.

2. Start your powerslide around here, then use the corner turbo to drag your kart close enough to shave the inside of the bend.

TOP FIVE CARS FOR FAT BOYS



DONKEY KONG'S EVIL BARREL
That's no kart! Fortunately you can't see too much of it from behind, and it's the easiest drive of all the heavy ones.

THE PIRANHA PIPES
Decent speed, terrible acceleration. But it has the weight to knock most other karts out of the way.

THE BOO PIPES
Looks exactly the same as the Piranha Pipes, except it's grey instead of green. Cheap or what? Great acceleration, lower top speed.

BOWSER'S LARDMOBILE
The fastest, heaviest vehicle of the lot, but it accelerates about as fast as continental drift.

WARIO'S PIMP WAGON
The same as the Kong monstrosity, for those who'd rather not drive a wooden barrel on tree trunk wheels.

PEACH CIRCUIT

Difficulty ★★★★★

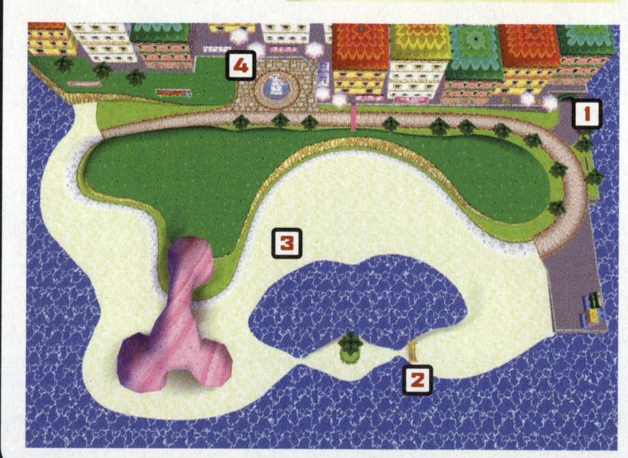
1. Drive into this pipe and you get spat straight out.

2. When you have a turbo stored up, go for this ramp to get a double item box, then boost through the water.

3. Potential for getting loads of powerslide turbos here.

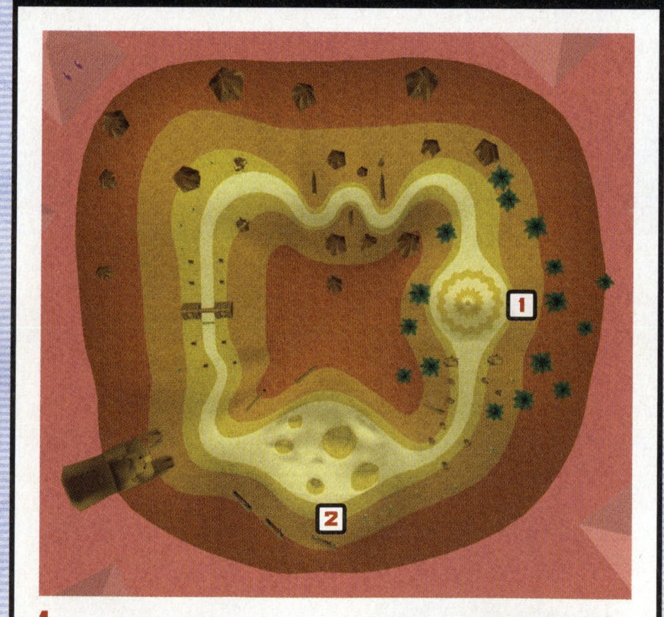
4. Scoot 'round the back here to collect some double boxes.





DRY DRY DESERT

Difficulty ★★★★★



1. Avoid this sandpit like the plague. Just powerslide smoothly around the edge of it.

2. You can shoot your way through the toppling creatures here, or hold your nerve and aim for the gaps they leave when they curl over.



FLOWER CUP

The one with the equivalent of the N64's Wario Stadium

MUSHROOM BRIDGE

Difficulty ★★★★★





1. Turn down here straight after the start and you can get blasted through a handy double item box.

2. You need a turbo to get over this sandy shortcut.

3. Speed boosts aplenty if you have the skills to drive along the bridge supports.

TOP FIVE LIGHT AND EASY





BULLET BILL
Super speedy and ultra light – ideal for nipping through urban traffic.

BARREL TRAIN
It's a train made from a barrel. Quick and heavy, with the added bonus of making a chff-chff sound instead of going brrrrrm!

BABY MAZZA PRAM
Goes like the clappers from a standing start, then gets left behind thanks to its puny top speed.

TOADETTE CAR
Sleek and speedy. We like it because it's one of the few things that doesn't seem embarrassing to choose.

BABY LUIGI PRAM
A bit better for top speed than Mazza's version, but it's had Luigi in it, so it smells a bit funny. And it's a motorised pram.

MARIO CIRCUIT

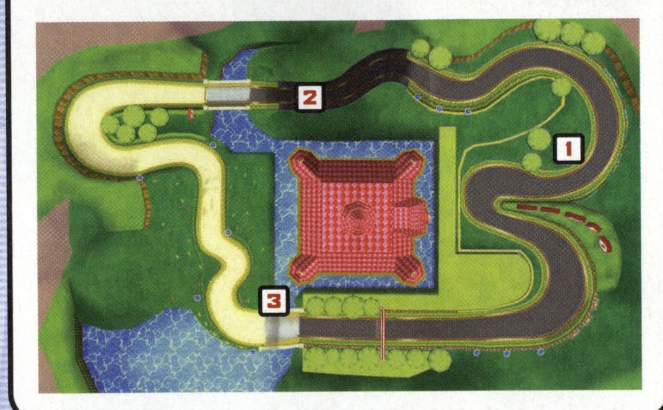
Difficulty ★★★★★

1. Turbo across here, behind the Chain Chomp, for a big shortcut.

2. The tunnel area here is the ideal place for dropping items on the track. Hard to avoid, they are.

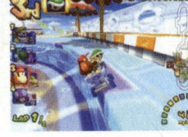
3. Stay central when jumping the ramp, otherwise the Piranha Plants might peck you.



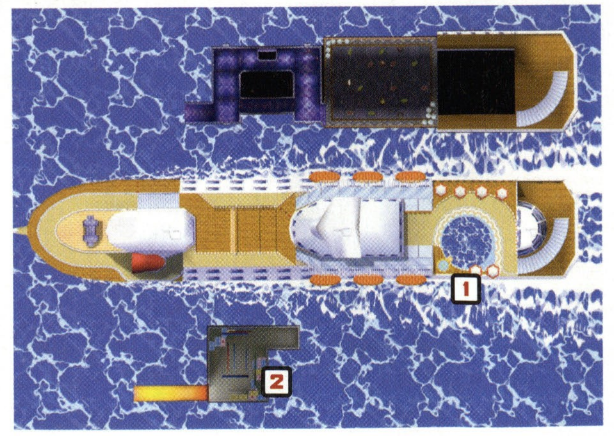


DAISY CRUISER

Difficulty ★★★★★





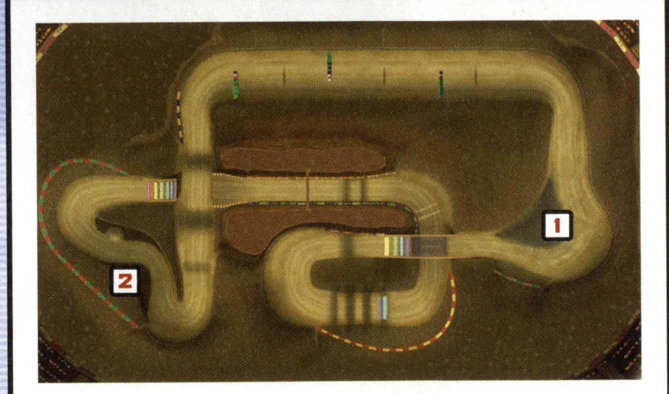


1. Go around the far side of the swimming pool for a hair-raisingly tight shortcut. You'll need great kart control if you're going to make it without falling in.

2. Dropping down the hole in the corridor past the dining room area looks like it could be a shortcut, but actually costs you a fair bit of time. There's nothing much down there.

WALUIGI STADIUM

Difficulty ★★★★★



1. Turbo here for the only major time saving you can make on this circuit. Stay well away from the mud if you have no mushrooms.

2. This chicane can be awkward if you're jostling for position, but a mushroom can help you speed right through the centre of it.





STAR CUP

Incorporating the best time trial track of the lot – Yoshi Circuit

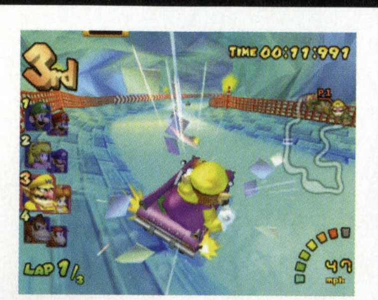
SHERBET LAND

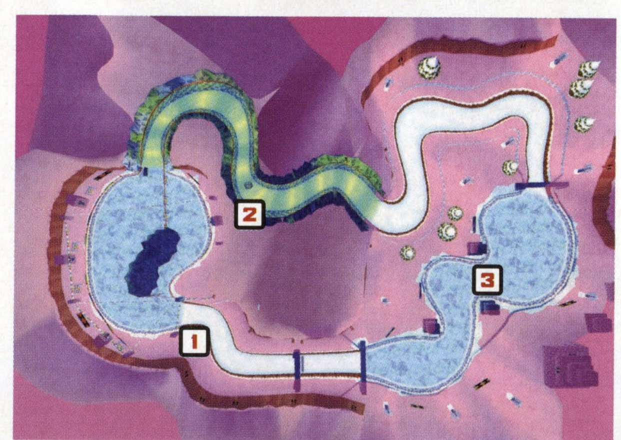
Difficulty ★★★★★

1. Hop over the corner to get the double item box and save a tiny bit of time.

2. The best place to drop stuff is in the gap by the tall pillar of ice in the cave section. You'll score loads of hits.

3. Line it up right and you can speed all the way across this deceptively simple section without having to turn.





YOSHI CIRCUIT

Difficulty ★★★★★



1. One mushroom or a star will be enough to blast you across this bit of grass and over the water, chopping off an awkward section of tunnel. Don't try it without the turbo.

2. Look out for the gap in the railings that leads to a tunnel in the cliff below. You can only make it with a mushroom or star, but there are extra item boxes waiting inside.

TOP FIVE MEDI-YUMMY



WARIO'S BATMOBILE
It's actually a kart, which is a bonus, and it's purple. Good start. Handles just like Mario's one, but looks cooler.

MARIO'S SENSIBLE KART
Good speed, but not too much. Good acceleration too, but we wouldn't want to go overboard would we now? The weight is about right too. Not too light, not too heavy. Mario also owns a pipe and slippers, and reads the Telegraph.

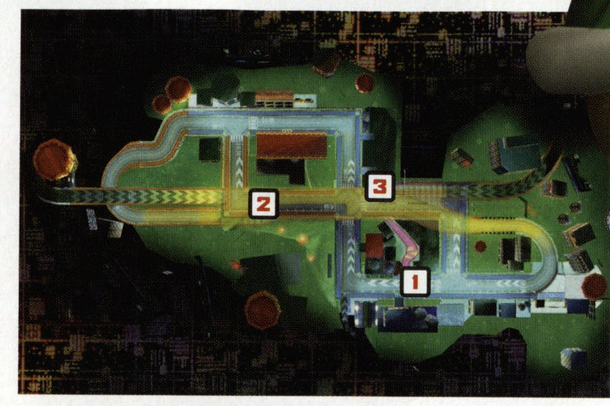
TROPHY KART
Actually, anybody can drive this once you've unlocked it. Handles a bit like a brick.

CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG
It's what Peach drives, and it's a vile shade of pink.

YOSHI'S VANITY CAR
Looks exactly like its owner. Everybody should get a car like this – it would mean the end of road rage for sure.

MUSHROOM CITY

Difficulty ★★★★★





1. Weave through the purple corridor for a shortcut and item box double whammy.

2. This road tends to be the quickest and has the lowest traffic flow to get in your way.

3. When you enter the hills leading to the final straight, hug the centre line to avoid vehicles.

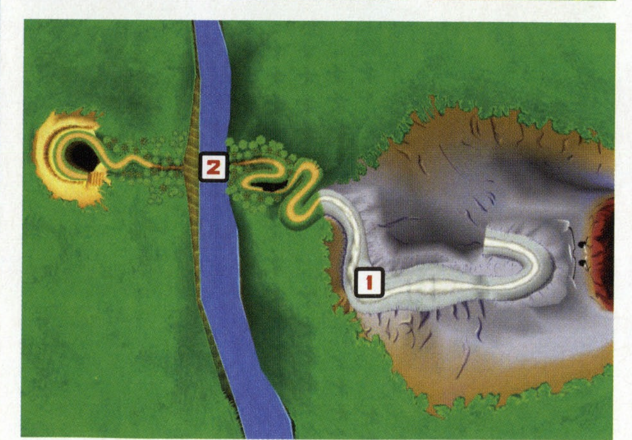
DK MOUNTAIN

Difficulty ★★★★★









1. Cut the corners as much as you like here. You don't slow down too badly even if you don't have a mushroom so you might as well take advantage of it.

2. The bridge is the ideal place to drop items as you can send opponents spinning off into the void. Also, remember not to waste homing weapons in the cannon area.

SPECIAL CUP

Man-boy separation begins right here

WARIO COLUSSEUM Difficulty ★★★★★





1. Work the corner turbo as many times as possible while sliding down the giant corkscrew sections.

2. The jump over the central bowl is the quickest way to go, but always stay in the middle of the ramp.

3. Hit Z to swap the racers while going through the field of item boxes. Helps you get two items, you know.

TOP FIVE FAVOURITE COURSES



YOSHI CIRCUIT
As close to a 'pure' racing circuit as you'll find in this game. Perfect for time trials and multiplayer.

BOWSER'S CASTLE
Plenty of hazards to avoid with skillful driving, and some delicious corners for powersliding.

WALUIGI STADIUM
Shame shrinking people no longer means they'll fail to make a jump, but this is still a great unpredictable course.

MUSHROOM BRIDGE
Shortcuts and alternative routes, plus the added danger of all that traffic, make this one of the tensest multiplayer tracks.

BABY PARK
It's just an oval, and a typical lap lasts barely ten seconds. Get a few good players blasting around it and you've got the GP equivalent of battle mode mayhem.

DINO DINO JUNGLE Difficulty ★★★★★

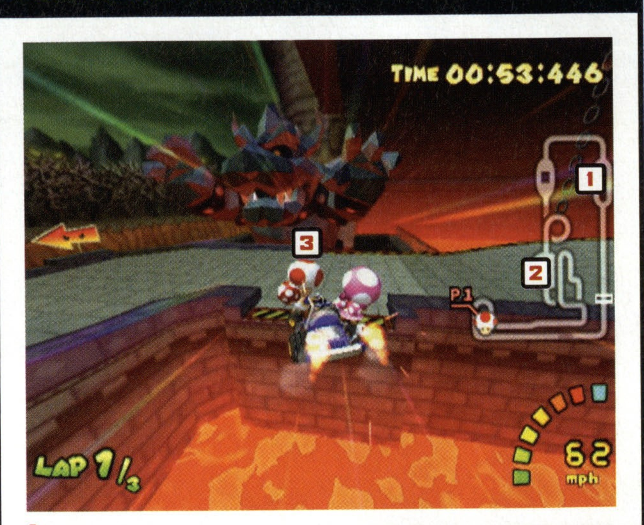
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1. There are three potential ways up the rickety bridge section. The left route has item boxes, the central route is easiest and the right route has speed boost sections.

2. Use a turbo to leap the ramp in the cavern, saving time.

3. Stay away from the dinosaur head even if it looks like it's off the track.

BOWSER'S CASTLE Difficulty ★★★★☆





1. Either side of the Thwomp-lined tunnel will work fine. Take the one with the double item boxes.

2. Drive between the flames in the large circular room. You can touch the edges of them without spinning out.

3. There's a shortcut near the stone Bowser, for turbo users. Blast over the black and yellow striped bit.

RAINBOW ROAD Difficulty ★★★☆☆





1. You can get two wheels right over the edge and still not fall off, so don't worry about the lack of barriers. Just drive your normal race.

2. The banked section with the turbo patches is the fastest part of any course in the game if you hit them all.

3. Hairpins are designed to be the perfect angle for an easy powerslide.

MULTIPLAYER PILE-UPS

The solo game is good, but you can wave goodbye to the outside world once you discover the sheer brilliance of the four-player matches.



△ Check out Petey Piranha, in third place. Don't fancy his chances of avoiding a plunge into the drink there.



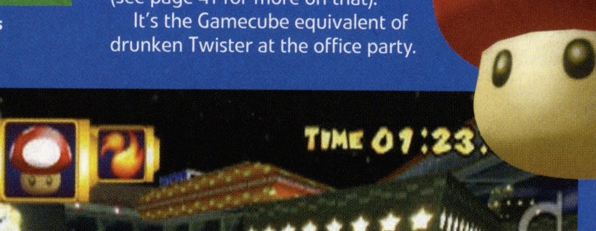
Mario Kart without a four-player mode would be like Christmas without presents. Scratch that – it would be more like a Christmas in which George Bush declared Santa Claus the most dangerous bearded fanatic in the whole world, hunted him down with chimney-seeking smart bombs, then broadcast grisly autopsy footage during the Queen's speech. And nobody wants the taste of their Christmas turkey spoiled by the sight of a friendly old fat man being eviscerated on primetime TV.

But fortunately *Mario Kart Double Dash* is packed with four-player treats, like delicious bits of suet in a mince pie.

There are battle games that are almost simple enough for your Grandma to play after a couple of medicinal sherries, plus full-on races for the members of the family with a little more hand-eye co-ordination.

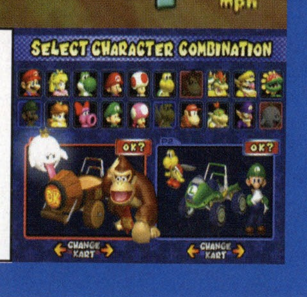
And you can even pair up to control a single kart, or link multiple Gamecubes via the complicated and improbably expensive LAN mode (see page 41 for more on that).

It's the Gamecube equivalent of drunken Twister at the office party.



CO-OPERATIVE

Two players in one kart! How on earth can that be any good? Surprisingly, it's great. The second player handles the weapons and has access to a special sliding move to steal items from other karters. They also have to waggle the joystick to activate the powerslide turbo, and press A at the right time to get a super boost from the start. When you fancy changing around and having a go at the other player's role, pressing Z at the same time makes the characters switch places. It's really nicely done.



STREET RACING

All the back-stabbing fun of a typical evening of four-player karting...



■ There are several routes across this bridge, including a tricky one along the outer arches.



■ The more corner turbos you can squeeze out during a powerslide, the faster you'll go.



■ There's no escaping a blue shell, no matter how far ahead you might be.



■ Stand back everybody, invincible Wario and friend coming through. Waaaaah!


△ This arena is probably the best one. The pipes warp you to different points, enabling you to escape weapons that would otherwise never miss.

BALLOON BATTLE

Battle game stalwart ahoy! Burst balloons like the meanest spirited clown at a birthday party from hell.

As in previous versions, the main versus game involves popping balloons. This time the arenas are much smaller, making it easy to find somebody to shoot at, and it's possible to regain a lost balloon by pinching one from another player. All the balloons are different colours as well. Handy..

Special weapons don't count here, levelling the playing field, so all characters get the same set of items. There are two unlockable battle arenas to find, making a total of six. The same levels are used in all three versus modes.

As ever, the best tactic is to grab as many item boxes as possible, throwing away the green shells and bananas until you get something slightly more certain to score a hit.


△ The tilting Mario stage. It's completely flat, you know.


△ The loser has to sit back and watch the others finish.

SHINE THIEF

A cunning game of skill and timing, or just a little bit random? Staring at the sun, Mario style.

Whatever you do during a 60-second round of Shine Thief mode, it's only the final moment that counts for scoring purposes.

There's a single Shine Sprite from *Mario Sunshine* placed in the battle arena, and the aim is to be the one holding it when the timer runs out.

Hitting people with weapons makes them drop the Shine somewhere nearby, which is the cue for a frantic dash to pick it up.

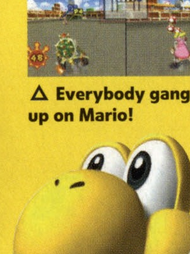
The game is basically a madcap chase after whoever's carrying the Shine, and the more players you can get involved, the better. It's a bit limp with just two or three.

After a fair bit of detailed experimentation we'd say it's probably the most enjoyable of the three battling modes. You can switch from game to game and keep your score tally too.


△ Luck or judgement? Our Koopa racers don't seem to care much.



△ You can win by holding the shine for just one second – as long as it's the very last second.


△ Everybody gang up on Mario!

BOB-OMB BLAST

Ordinary weapons too tame for you? Time to get hold of something with a little more bang.

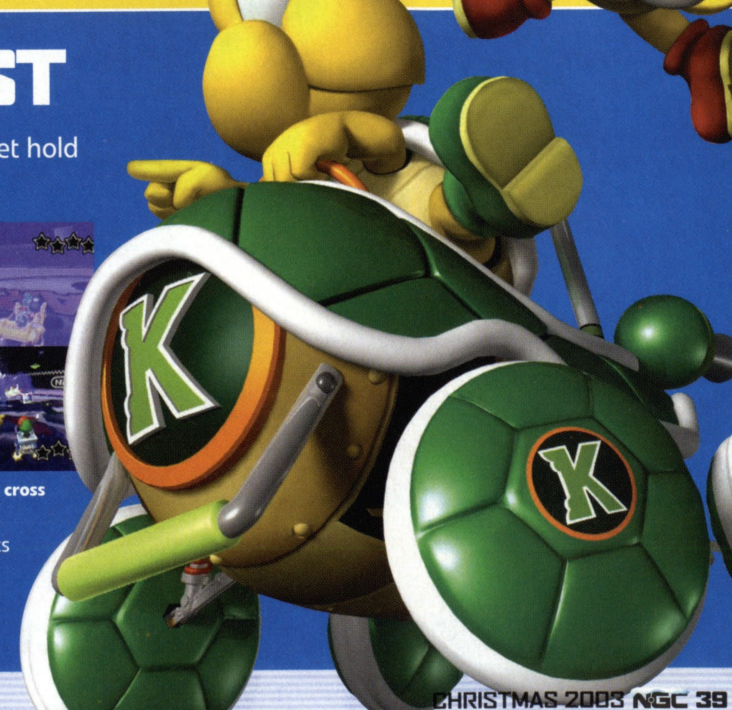



△ More random explosions than a Friday night in Baghdad.

If Shine Thief can be a bit of a free-for-all, Bob-omb Blast is full-on, Frank Bruno loopy. The item boxes all contain super-powered Bob-ombs, of which you can carry up to ten at once, and the aim is to score three or four successive hits on the opposition.

Get hit by someone else's explosion and your tally goes back to zero. Games generally involve the screen flashing like a strobe light as colourful explosions erupt all over the level, and there's no telling how long a round will last. It could go on for a couple of minutes or it could all be over in a couple of seconds if somebody gets lucky early on. Basically, it's buckets of good, random fun.


△ Just lob the bombs and cross your fingers.



MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH!!
"Watch everybody clear the road in terror"

AVERTING KARTASTROPHE

Know your items and you won't go far wrong in the high-octane world of *Double Dash*. Here's the full rundown of what's on offer…

GREEN SHELL



Shoots ahead in a straight line, bouncing off the walls, or sits on the track waiting to be run over. Same as ever, really.

RED SHELL



It's your homing buddy, but this time it seeks and destroys from absolutely miles away and almost never misses.

BANANA



Lob it ahead if you're a good shot, or drop it like a static green shell. This time you can't brake to stop skidding on it. Boo!

MUSHROOM



Gain a mighty boost of mushroom-fuelled energy as the rear character rams the fungus right up your exhaust pipe.

LIGHTNING



Shrinks all the other players. But now they don't go much slower, and can still make any jump. Not massively useful.

STAR



A handy burst of invincibility for blasting through pretty much everything. Watch everybody clear the road in terror.

BLUE SHELL



Homes in on the leader. We haven't seen one of these miss from anywhere, and it makes a gigantic blue explosion.

FIREBALLS



Mario's signature weapon is a volley of five fireballs that will bounce off one wall before expiring. Hard to miss, really.

CHAIN CHOMP



Babies Mario and Luigi get dragged along by this huge beast before it breaks free and rampages around the track.

GOLDEN 'SHROOM



For the Toads only. It's the same as the special mushroom in the N64 version, awarding loads of boosts for a while.

GIANT BANANA



The Kongs have this special banana that forms a hefty blockage on the track and splits into smaller 'nanas when hit.

YOSHI'S EGG



Homes in like a slightly slower red shell, then splits into goodies (and some bad stuff too) upon impact.

BOWSER SHELL



The biggest green shell we've ever seen. It's slow, but the sheer size of it makes it a real challenge to avoid.

LUCKY HEARTS



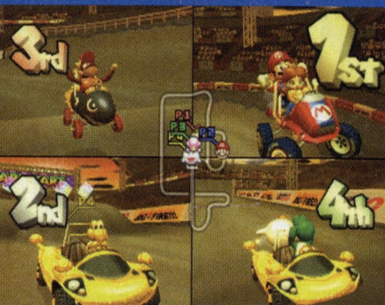
Peach and Daisy use this special item to snatch any weapons fired at them or left lying around on the track. Sweet.

BOB-OMB



Wario's favourite. It explodes when another kart comes near, and is likely to take out its user if thrown forwards.

TRIPLE SHELLS



Koopas are now the only ones who can use triple shells, and they no longer orbit around the kart. Good to have.

DRIVE TIME!

Rattle through the Grand Prix mode in whatever way you see fit, and you'll soon have access to Mario Kart's deepest secrets…

KER-CHING

It's the first Mario Kart with hidden extras. Go find 'em, people.

Introducing the TOAD & TOADETTE combo!

MAD SKILLZ

Beat the vast All Cups Tour mode, in which you race all 16 tracks with no retries if you mess up on the very last race, and you'll have skillz indeed.



Introducing the PETEY PIRANHA & KING BOO combo!

MIRROR MODE

Finish the whole thing in 150cc mode and you can play it all over again, in reverse. There are more things to unlock here too.

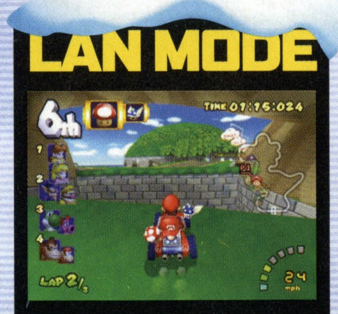
Let's not beat around the bush here. We think *Mario Kart Double Dash* is the best game in the series so far. Some folks won't agree with us, others will shake their heads in dismay, before digging out their old SNES carts from under a pile of well-thumbed Super Play magazines. But we're convinced that approaching it from the perspective of a first-time *Mario Karter*, as we suspect the majority of *Double Dash* buyers will be, it's clear that this new edition is the best multiplayer racing game available.

We're talking four players in a super-smooth split-screen mode, competing with a set of weapons that's so well balanced, the result of every race is almost always in doubt until the moment you cross the finish line. We've lost races by a thousandth of a second, and come within one deep breath of testing whether the office's single-glazed windows can withstand the impact of a flying Wavebird. We've won by similar margins, using turbo mushrooms to barge rivals out of a deserved victory, or popping up from fourth place thanks to a wholly unjustifiable blue shell and two-and-a-half laps of totally inept driving.

And for every moment when the whole thing seems just a bit too random, or those times when it feels like it's really *Mario* meets *Wacky Races* rather than the *Mario Kart* it's advertised as, we've found more reasons why this game is impossible to dislike for more than a couple of minutes.

> **"THE RESULT OF EVERY RACE IS ALMOST ALWAYS IN DOUBT UNTIL THE VERY LAST SECOND"**

LAN MODE



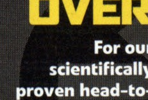
If you want to play with more than four players you'll need to link two Gamecubes and game discs via broadband adaptors and an ethernet crossover cable. Up to eight Gamecubes can be linked, so you can play with a full screen to yourself if you like, but to do that you'll also need a LAN hub and a different type of ethernet cable. Best of luck setting that lot up. The dual-Gamecube link is the most feasible, and it's absolutely superb – well worth the hassle. The framerate suffers slightly with two quadruple split screens running, but it really does have to be played to be believed.

KART FORM

The basic structure is much the same as all the previous installments in the series, with Grand Prix races against seven computer opponents, four different cup competitions and a wide range of weaponry to chuck around as you attempt to balance fast driving with the unique demands of a race in which every opponent wants to do you in.

Expert use of weapons is the only way to get ahead, which is where the new tactical possibilities offered by the twin-driver feature really make a difference.

Instead of choosing a heavy, medium or light kart to race in, you pick two



TURN OVER
For our scientifically proven head-to-head between all four *Mario Kart* games, and the final verdict. Gasp!

KART TO KART KOMPARISON

"But the SNES version was so much better..." Quit whining, you snivelling retro geek.

SUPER MARIO KART

Released in 1993 for the mighty SNES, scoring 93% in Super Play magazine.



■ **HANDLING** Definitely a strong point. Precise powerslides and big differences between the various characters. **10/10**

■ **TRACKS** The odd duffer and a bunch of classic Ghost Valley and Bowser Castle courses. Very well done. **9/10**

■ **WEAPONS** Limited in number, and the computer characters are only able to use one type of weapon each. **7/10**

■ **MULTIPLAYER** The limitations of the hardware mean the game only supports two players at once. Still good fun. **7/10**

VERDICT
Stands up a lot better than most games of its day, and remains the purists' choice thanks to its tight handling. But as an all-rounder, it's not the best. **33/40**

MARIO KART 64

The long-awaited sequel, which snagged a healthy 91% in N64 magazine back in 1997.



■ **HANDLING** Nowhere near as tight as the other versions, but with the brilliant 'secret' corner turbo feature. **8/10**

■ **TRACKS** Rainbow Road is awful, Wario Stadium remains a multiplayer favourite to this day (round here anyway). **8/10**

■ **WEAPONS** Bigger, better, more. Triple shells, blue spiny ones, and loads of tactics for avoiding/using them. **9/10**

■ **MULTIPLAYER** Vicious four-player thrills. You could hear the screams from the N64 magazine office half a mile away. **9/10**

VERDICT
Fantastic with four players, which is the way this little masterpiece was designed to be experienced. Let down by a couple of tedious courses. **34/40**

MARIO KART SUPER CIRCUIT

Released in 2001 for the GBA, copping five stars right here in NGC.



■ **HANDLING** Back to the SNES version, with the bonus of a tricky powerslide turbo to think about. Excellent. **10/10**

■ **TRACKS** Flattened versions of the SNES tracks plus a wide selection of fantastic new ones. Faultless, really. **10/10**

■ **WEAPONS** Incorporates many of the N64 version's features to great effect. Who can live without triple shells now? **9/10**

■ **MULTIPLAYER** A stripped-down version for just one cart, and a full-blown four-player mode for multi-pak links. **8/10**

VERDICT
The most multiplayer fun you can have with a GBA and a handful of link-up cables. And it has the most uplifting final credits music of any game. **37/40**

MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH

You're almost at the end of the review for this one. So how does it fare?



■ **HANDLING** Halfway between the SNES precision style and the N64 easy-driving way. Play it how you see fit. **9/10**

■ **TRACKS** Consistently excellent, although lacking in sneaky shortcut potential thanks to those nasty invisible walls. **9/10**

■ **WEAPONS** Most of the oldies, powered up to the max, and some great character-specific special items. **10/10**

■ **MULTIPLAYER** Eight players on two networked Gamecubes – amazing. Or eight Gamecubes and 16 players! **10/10**

VERDICT
The pinnacle of karting. Even if they're not really karts and it doesn't play like the original, etc. The best solo and multi-player modes of the lot. **38/40**



characters from an eventual list of 20, then select a kart they can both fit into. Basically, you're limited by the largest character you choose. There are at least four or five available for any given combination, and it's the type of vehicle rather than the characters that determines how the thing handles.

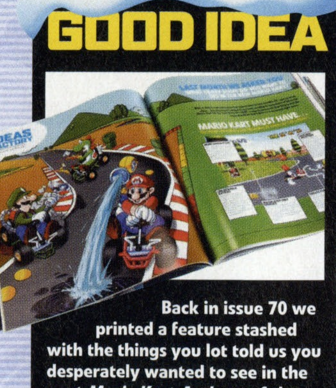
Whatever you select, you'll find it's pitched roughly halfway between the slippery N64 version and the super-grippy SNES original. You can powerslide forever without spinning out, and you can clip the edges of sweeping corners just as precisely as you could on the SNES. But to do it properly you'll need to be adept at dragging the kart around using the joystick-waggling turbo feature from the N64, which we've long thought was a genius idea.

The weapons, powered up to an outrageous degree, are fantastic to use. You won't find yourself hoarding them like you might have in previous *Mario Kart* titles, because getting hit by most things causes your karters to drop their items, but you'll soon get used to it. If anything, not having played a *Mario Kart* game before could be a distinct advantage.

KART ACHE

As *Mario Kart* veterans, we found the fact that the karts no longer hop when starting a slide to be extremely offputting. It's one of the unique characteristics of the series, something that sets it apart from the multitude of feeble imitators. It shouldn't have been dropped. And there's now very little room allowed for discovering your own time trial

GOOD IDEA



Back in issue 70 we printed a feature stashed with the things you lot told us you desperately wanted to see in the next *Mario Kart*. And out of the many ideas you sent in, the following demands made it into the finished game: Unlockable extras; more characters; character-specific weapons; character-specific vehicles; Luigi's Mansion course. Not a huge amount, but still a result given that other ideas included impossible-to-implement stuff like an on-foot RPG mode. Nice work, people.



△ A spot of shortcut action. If you really want to be evil, lay a Bowser shell or giant banana in here so nobody else can use the tunnel without crashing.

△ Hit the rubber rings. Why not?



- Great graphics.
- Superior handling.
- Outstanding multiplayer modes.



- No retries in Grand Prix mode.
- Blatantly cheating computer opposition.



Worms 3D
Team 17/Sega
NGC/87 90%
A slower paced game for four players, with no driving skills required.



SMART KARTING
Your licence to cause mayhem...



SHELL BLOCKING
When the incoming weapon warning icon appears behind your kart, wait until the last moment before dropping a defensive shell or other item.



CORNER TURBO
No longer the 'secret' it was on the N64. While sliding waggle the stick until your sparks turn blue, then release the trigger. Waggle straight and fast, folks.



STEALING FIRST
Approaching the line, neck and neck with another racer? Start a powerslide and rattle off a couple of quick corner turbos. Watch your friend's face turn to thunder.



THE BEST FOR LAST
Hanging around the back of the pack is a smart way to pick up good weapons, but you're fairly certain to be robbed of them if you wait too long. Shoot 'em quick!

shortcuts, because there are invisible walls around the parts of the tracks where you might have some scope for taking an exploratory leap into the unknown.

The Grand Prix setup gets a tad frustrating on the harder settings. Actually, by 'a tad frustrating' we really mean 'painfully annoying'. It's not because the computer characters like to cheat you and wipe you out on the final straight.

That's part of *Mario Kart* – the opposition will keep up so you don't have any boring races where you've all but won by the end of the first lap. The problem is the lack of retries. If you finish sixth or seventh in one of the rounds you've got no chance of winning a gold cup, but you can't have another go at it. That's absolutely awful if it happens towards the end of a race series, particularly the arduous, 16-circuit All Cup Tour. Quite why Nintendo chose to implement such a dire system is beyond comprehension.

But that's about all we could think of as far as single-player gripes go. There's far more to admire than there is to condemn, and when you're playing as the designers clearly intended you to play, head to head against at least three friends, any niggling doubts over the game's worthiness soon evaporate.

The four-player mode puts every other multiplayer racing game to shame. It's what the game was built for, and it's teeth-grindingly competitive throughout, horribly cruel and immensely rewarding at the same time.

> **"THE BEST GAME OF ITS TYPE. THERE'S NOBODY ELSE FIT TO DRIVE IN MARIO'S SLIPSTREAM"**

And if you ever get the chance to play the LAN mode, with multiple consoles hosting a superb tournament for as many as 16 simultaneous players, you'll wonder why Gamecubes aren't sold in multipacks.

It's gimmicky. It has vehicles like steam trains made from barrels instead of proper karts. It has Diddy Kong, and no Ghost Valley or Banshee Boardwalk tracks.

It's also the best game of its type, sweeping all of those countless weak copycats into the dustbin with one expertly timed powerslide. Forget everything you thought you knew, and get with *Double Dash*. There's still nobody else out there fit to drive in Mario's slipstream.

MARTIN KITTS

MISSING



The Game Boy and N64 versions enabled you to save your kart from spinning out after running over a banana skin. As long as your kart was driving in a straight line, tapping the brakes helped regain control, accompanied by a whistle of relief from the driver. But on the Gamecube you just spin out of control as soon as you touch a banana. The damn things work exactly like shells dropped on the track, which can be seriously annoying. We've no idea why they didn't keep this excellent, user-friendly feature in the game.



9 VISUALS
Detailed with one player, silky smooth with up to four.



9 SOUNDS
Some of the best vocal performances in any Nintendo game.



9 MASTERY
A fine balance between accessibility and skill factor.

10 LIFESPAN
The multiplayer mode will never go away. It's simply the best.

VERDICT
After all this time, thank goodness it doesn't disappoint. Supreme multiplayer and an expanded GP mode add up to the best *Mario Kart* ever.





GET £5 OFF MARIO KART!

You've read the review – now get money off the game!

USE THE VOUCHER BELOW AND ENTER NGC's MUSHROOM KINGDOM KART CHAMPIONSHIP

This is your chance to claim fame and glory as Britain's premier *Mario Kart* player. We're after your best Time Trial times for the four cups (below you'll see some suggested target times – beat these and you're on the right track). We'll need photographic/video evidence of your time trial records as proof. We'll be printing a leader board next issue – check and see where you've come…

Send all entries to:
Mushroom Kingdom Kart Champ.
NGC
30 Monmouth Street
Bath
BA1 2BW

TIME TRIAL TARGET TIMES

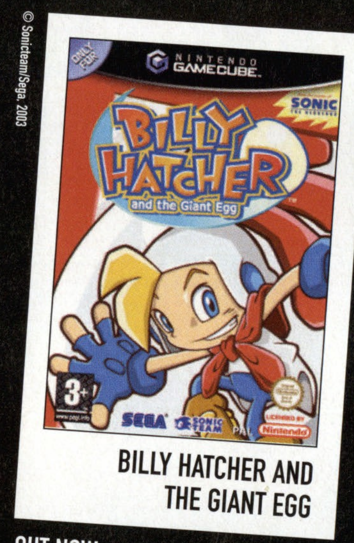
MUSHROOM CUP		STAR CUP	
Luigi Circuit	1'30"322	Sherbert Land	1'39"118
Peach Beach	1'25"125	Mushroom City	1'59"971
Baby ParK	1'15"037	Yoshi Circuit	2'21"527
Dry Dry Desert	1'57"085	DK Mountain	2'11"998
FLOWER CUP		**SPECIAL CUP**	
Mushroom Bridge	1'40"732	Wario Colosseum	2'28"776
Mario Circuit	2'00"915	Dino Dino Jungle	2'15"064
Daisy Cruiser	2'09"080	Bowser's Castle	3'03"233
Waluigi Stadium	2'06"426	Rainbow Road	3'20"135

GameCube this Christmas



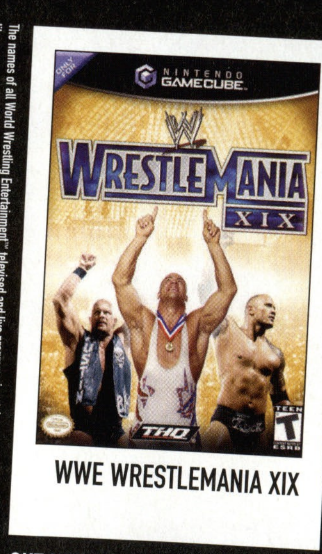
F-ZERO™ GX*

OUT NOW



BILLY HATCHER AND THE GIANT EGG

OUT NOW



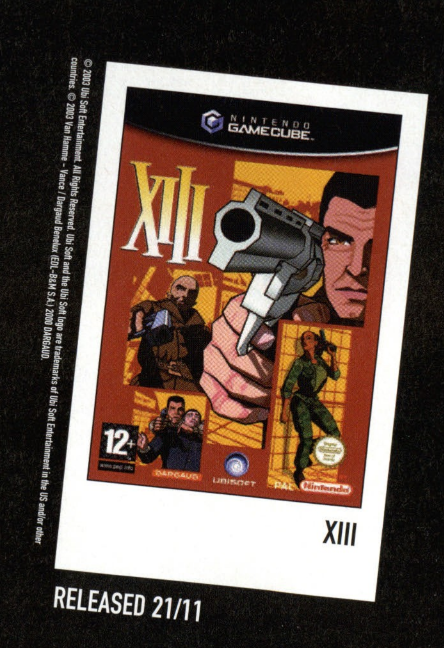
WWE WRESTLEMANIA XIX

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VIEWTIFUL JOE

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XIII

RELEASED 21/11

whatever turns you on!



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*Games exclusive to Nintendo GameCube.


△ Each enemy takes a surprising number of hits before it bursts apart in a hail of bolts.


△ The radar helps locate the last few stragglers in a zone before you can move on.


△ Gun emplacements are powerful allies, but you'll probably get creamed trying to get 'em.


△ Larger robots drop their energy core, which tops up your battery. Obvious really.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	VIVENDI
DEVELOPER	SWINGIN' APE
RELEASE DATE	21ST NOV
PLAYERS	1-4
MEMORY CARD PAGES	10
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40

METAL ARMS
GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM

Where we pose the question 'is Glitch In The System a Pain In The Rectum'?


△ Some lovely movies keep the story rumbling along nicely.

Now here's a tricky one. Is *Metal Arms* a totally original game or just a mish-mash of game styles that – almost by chance – gets everything right? And in this era of million-pound voiceovers by B-team Hollywood actors and facial recreations of Bratislavan third division squads, does anyone give a stuff about a home-grown 'comedy robot' game?

One of the best games of the last 12 months was *TimeSplitters 2*. Did it sell anything like it should have? No, 'cos it had bandy-legged 1940s gangsters in it. Even the sci-fi levels were out of a '50s B-movie.

And robots in games – would you prefer them to be huge, have lasers for eyes and be capable of clearing cities in a single bound or would you like them to be small, yellow, and to scuttle about the place with the screen presence of Jimmie Krankie? Well, exactly. So why do we kind of like *Metal Arms*?

ROBOT DE NIRO

Deep in its clanky core it's a shoot-'em-up. There are loads of enemies on screen at once, you're frequently backed up by five or so mates and there's a real sense of robowar as a vast steely door flips open and out pour ten or so enemy Milbots spewing out a Star Wars-style laser barrage. Thanks to some wickedly accurate auto-targeting (which you can turn off) you then just wave your sights over the enemy throng, wait until it turns red (to show you're pointing at one of the bad guys

ASSAULT AND BATTERY
Your health meter – or battery life. Pick up the energy cores of destroyed 'bots to top it up. Watch out for blue pick-ups, which extend the bar.

THAT'S YOUR 'BOT
Enemies are slightly spindlier (and redder) than your cute 'botty mates. Shoot them all. Shoot them all dead!

RADAR LOVELY
While it doesn't show unexplored bits of level or where you should go, it does show you the good and bad 'bots as yellow and red dots.

BOMB THUMB
Your left arm is your throwing arm, so throw grenades with the left shoulder button. Team it with the slingshot on the right to fire much further.

THE RIGHT STUFF
This is what you've got in your right hand, where you keep your guns. Holding X and pressing up and down on the D-pad lets you select what you need. The game pauses while you scroll through the many options so you're not left scrambling for the scatter gun when a suicide squad leaps out.

rather than one of your mates) and then press fire. Of course, dodging about left and right and a spot of circle-strafing is always a good move too.

There's a never-ending supply of different 'bots, some armed with rockets, some seemingly built out of scrap, and you remove the different types from the game in different ways. Which is where the 18 different (and upgradable) weapons come in.

Some (like the rocket launcher) speak for themselves; others, like the scatter gun, are simply shotguns by another name – get up close and bam! Blow 'em into a hundred pieces with a single shot. Always satisfying. And when some enemies are destroyed you can not only pick up their energy core to recharge your battery (your health bar) but can pick up washers from their steaming scattered remains.

Washers are currency in the game and on later levels you have to spend them wisely on the right upgrades and

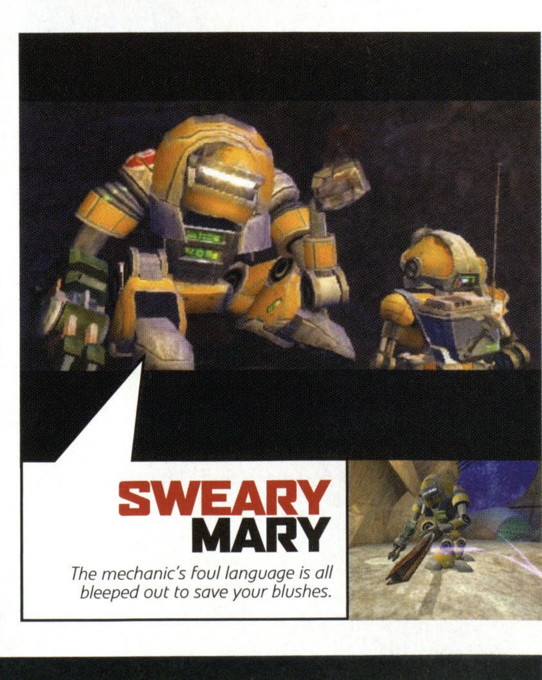
PLOT IN THE DARK!
The story centres on Glitch, a small robot of unknown origin who finds himself on the planet Ironstar helping the Droid rebellion against the evil Milbots lead by General Corrosive. The planet itself is made of scrap and – it is said – deep within its tinny heart can be found the Morbots, the planet's creators and the holders of Ironstar's incredible secret. Go on, admit it, you're interested.

ammo if you're to get through without stomping the joypad into the ground in utter frustration.

SMACK ON THE 'BOT
You see, this game is hard. It's Ray Winstone in steel top hat and tails hard. We've beaten tougher games in our time, admittedly – but never has a game made its hardcore nature so apparent so early in proceedings.

It's all very well giving you plenty of cannon-fodder on level one but when you have to hit each one 30 or so times, you're getting creamed before the training level is over.

Team vast numbers of tough enemies with superb AI and you're in for even more of a challenge. It really is like *Halo* in this respect. Once you've been sighted, opponents absolutely willl not stop until you or they are dead. They'll cross bridges and walk miles, just to kill you. They open fire then, when you fight

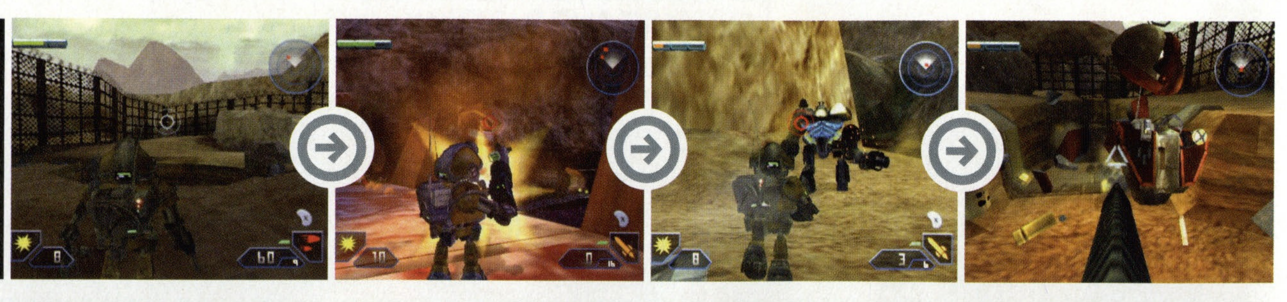


SWEARY MARY
The mechanic's foul language is all bleeped out to save your blushes.

"They won't rest until you or they are dead"

BIG BOT

Here's how things often pan out. A few 'bots will be patrolling then, as you approach, one will spot you. They all come running – then run for cover as you open fire. Then a really big 'bot will come… Good job there's a gun emplacement to take control of.





△ **For the most part you're shepherded down a corridor. It's a shoot-'em-up, see? Ahhhhh.**



△ **Clear an area and your mates get to move on for more killing.**



△ **Your targeting reticule changes colour when you're bang on target.**



back, they hide. Just when you think they're on the other side of the rock, they've circled around and are shooting you in the arse again. Give us a break!

GLITCH INVASION

Metal Arms' 40 levels are for the most part ingenious. Large chambers – be they enemy compounds, a network of tunnels or sections of Droidtown, the city that Glitch is trying to save – are filled with pick-ups and enemies and you're never far from an arrow on a wall or a door indicating where you can find more robot-blasting action.

If anything, though, the camera is a little too close to the action. Glitch tends to hog the screen, so when you're running and firing forwards he often obscures what you're shooting at. Be prepared for lots of squizzing about on the C-stick as you stand on an outcrop trying to make sense of the browns and greys that form the pathway to the next section.

And after falling to your death a few times you learn to spot the *tiny shadow* that means that there's a gap in the path ahead and that you should press jump rather than blunder over the edge like a dumbass.

RUST IN PEACE

And what is it with water in this game? Every zone of every level features at least one pit/tank/puddle that, as soon as you so much as *step* in it, will kill you. We'll buy into the idea that water isn't good for droids, but when you're backing up at speed as a herd of metallic walkers charges at you, falling into a puddle and dying isn't an accurate representation of what happens when robot meets water, it's an example of poor (in other words, harsh) level design, plain and simple.

SCRAP METAL MERCHANTS

Keep an eye out for this couple of likely lads. They crop up from time to time (listen for them calling you from caves or behind rocks) and they'll flog you upgrades to your weapons and ammo. Don't miss out on the Scope upgrade, which turns your rivet gun into a sniper rifle that fires exploding bolts. Very handy.



Δ Some weapons work much better when you get up close 'n' personal.




Δ Some of the reet big 'bots are screen-fillingly impressive. Look!



Δ Some of the dark levels are a real pain – you can't see anything!

FUN WITH GUNS

You'll get nowhere if you're still using your Mining Laser by level 3…



Your first gun (the Mining Laser) certainly feels impressive but when it takes 50-odd shots to fell a single bad guy… Tsk.



The Scatter Gun is much more effective. Run up close, and let 'em have it. A single blast will smash most 'bots.



The rocket launcher is very powerful. Try scanning the horizon to see if you get a lock on. If you do, launch a surprise attack.



The mother of all weapons are the tanks and giant robots. Anyone who's played Halo will find the tanks easy to control…



Δ Beware the reconstituting 'bots. They come back to life when you least expect it.

Δ It wouldn't be an action/exploration/shoot-'em-up without plenty of pick ups.

Team this with firm (but mostly fair) restart points and you're in for lots of replay 'value' as you try to get to where you were before without dying.

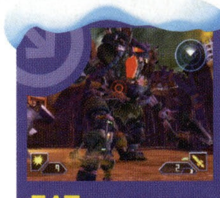
SOUND-STORM

But, for a minute, let's sing the praises of this funky, chunky game. It looks great (huge draw distances, imaginative enemies and level designs) and it *sounds* better. There's loads of music, dialogue and cut-scenes telling the story, and the effects mixing is pure genius, making you reset the volume of your TV to cope with a safe level of music-plus-blasting, then suddenly, just when you thought it was safe, it'll throw in some enormous, ear-shatteringly loud explosions (usually paired with screen-shake and pad-rumble). Very clever – if a little annoying for the old lady who lives downstairs.

There's even a four-player Deathmatch mode featuring all the usual options. To unlock additional levels for deathmatches, you have to collect secret chips in the main game. The multiplayer mode works well but games all too often dissolve into just standing in front of each other and shooting, such is the close-up nature of the combat. It's a bonus, and it's worth investigating, but it's nothing super-special. So, *Metal Arms* has got the lot, including a satisfyingly tough difficulty level but – and this is the mother of all 'buts' – who's going to buy this? Okay, so 'Cube's not exactly overburdened with shooters, but if you want multi-levelled, multi-tasked, multiplayer shooty action you'll probably go for something with the realism of *Conflict Desert Storm 2* or even the slightly more cartoony *Freedom Fighters*. And if you want 'proper' sci-fi and a universe loaded with, um… atmosphere, you've probably already bought *Rogue Squadron III*. We're not all that sure that there's an untapped market for the 'really hard comedy robot shoot-'em-up'. And that's a real shame as this game looks and plays great.

Is being 'tough' and 'original' really enough to bag this worthy shooter an audience? That's a question only time can answer. If only they'd signed up someone popular like David Beckham for the voiceover. Or David Dickinson? David Yip? David Gosen..?

DANIEL GRIFFITHS



EAT GRENADES!

This boss is insanely tough and is a good indicator as to the general fiendishness and difficulty of the game. First you've got to pepper him with missiles while he throws a massive ball and chain at you. Then, while he stands panting, you've got to throw grenades into his open mouth. Difficult? You bet your sweet metallic ass.

> **"THERE'S LOADS OF MUSIC AND DIALOGUE, AND THE EFFECTS MIXING IS PURE GENIUS"**



- Well designed levels.
- Original characters and story.
- Lots of mad action.




- Slightly claustrophobic camera.
- Can be rock hard.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Ikaruga
Atari
NGC/80 85%
More screens full 'o bullets and massive bosses – but this has old-skool flavour.



8 VISUALS

Great looking, great draw distance, but some jagged edges.



10 SOUNDS

Totally brilliant music, dialogue and sound effects.

8 MASTERY

It plays like a shooter with platforming and exploration thrown in.

8 LIFESPAN

Big and really hard in places. If you want a challenge, it's for you.

VERDICT

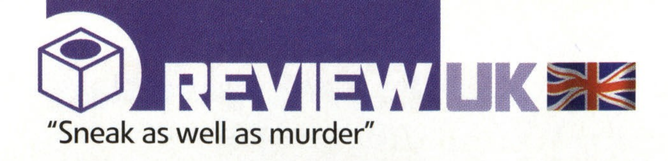
It's got everything going for it and is great fun to play. If you're looking for an original, clever shoot-'em-up that breaks all the rules then this is it.



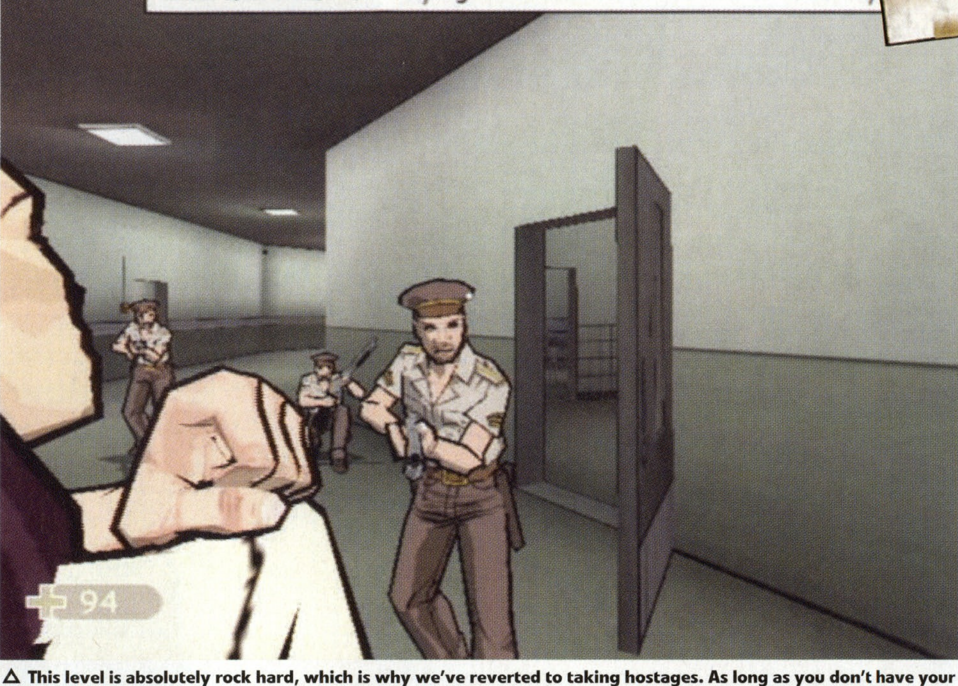




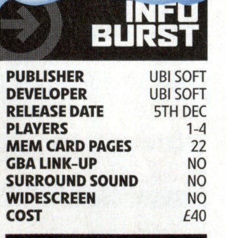
DID YOU KNOW? The word 'glitch' became commonly used after US astronaut john Glenn used it in his 1962 book We Seven.



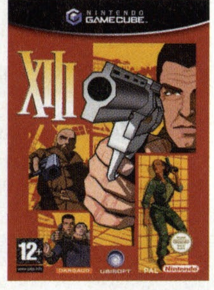
"Sneak as well as murder"



△ This level is absolutely rock hard, which is why we've reverted to taking hostages. As long as you don't have your back to these soldiers, they won't be able to take pot shots at you. Especially useful as they're armed with shotguns.



PUBLISHER	UBI SOFT
DEVELOPER	UBI SOFT
RELEASE DATE	5TH DEC
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM CARD PAGES	22
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40





XIII

Beautiful-looking shooter recalls GoldenEye. But with a few niggles.

The world's first cel-shaded first-person shooter is also an accomplished game in its own right with death aplenty, a vast challenge, and a wickedly twisting story. That's the good news. The bad news is it's unfairly hard, sloppy in places and pretty linear.

Still, you have to take the rough with the smooth, and there's lots of smooth in *XIII*. The cel-shading is only half the story. Character design, animation, locations, textures – this has got it all, plus realistic deaths and a dash of claret. When you kill in *XIII*, you kill in style.

At heart, it's not a complicated beast, although it does sport a number of innovative ideas. Chief among these is the 'Sixth Sense', an ability to visualise enemies' footsteps as they move closer or further away. It fits in with the comic book origins of the game, but it's more than a showy addition. It adds tension as well as a stealthy slant – although fewer levels than you'd like require you to sneak as well as murder.

The levels are punctuated with a number of neat touches: comic book panels pop up when you kill using the crossbow, while bodies being shot off buildings are accompanied by a long stream of words that disappears as the body falls. Additionally, you can make weapons from the unlikeliest of sources: bottles, chairs, ashtrays and brooms left around the locations you're padding about in can be put to good use when you've been given orders not to end lives. Truth is, you'll probably opt for the crossbow or silenced pistols if you want to keep a low profile, but the idea is a good one. And, anyway, some levels require you not to cut down foes.

Weapons and enemies tend to work in tandem. The AI's always impressive, and while the choice of bangsticks isn't huge, they're all markedly different and have plainly been created with certain sections of the game in mind. The only thing lacking is an automatic reload.

Indeed, this is the first of the game's real clangers, especially in the heat of a fight, where you're spraying the bullets around and then suddenly – *click*. The



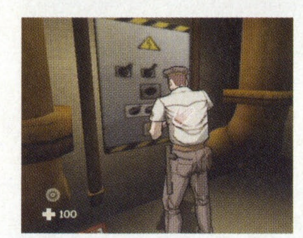
AIM HIGH

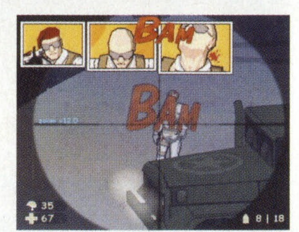
As well as the lack of checkpoints, XIII also suffers from some poorly implemented aiming. As you play the game, you do become used to it, but to start with you'll be tearing your hair out as the game, which supposedly comes with a lock-on mechanism, sends your cross-hairs drifting away from the intended victim. A Hitman 2-style lock-on would have done it.

"AT ITS HEART, XIII'S NOT SUCH A COMPLICATED BEAST, ALTHOUGH IT DOES SPORT A NUMBER OF REALLY QUITE INNOVATIVE IDEAS"



△ The red valleys of the American midwest first give you the chance to have a stab at using the RPG. Here, though, we've gone for the rifle.

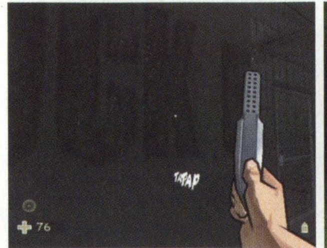




△ Take hostages by creeping up on foes. Or just shoot them in the head.

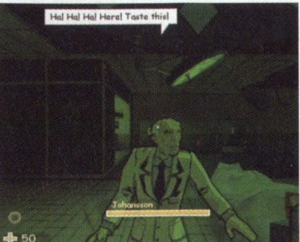
CONSPIRACY THEORY

There's plenty to watch out for in *XIII*. And plenty of it involves murder.



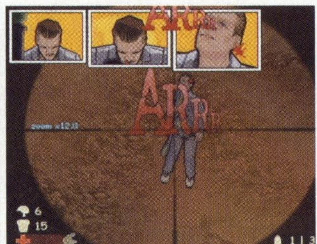
SKILLS

As you progress through the game, you pick up new skills. Pictured is the Sixth Sense, but there's also stealth, which removes 50% of the sound you make.



BOSSES

The big foes in XIII aren't so big – but they've got plenty of life. This is Doctor Johansson, who you meet in an asylum about midway through the game. Freak.



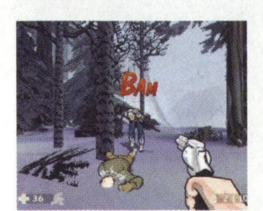
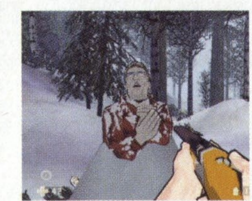
GUNS

There's a host of top-notch weaponry, but the most satisfying has to be the sniper rifle. Plug someone right in the bonce and they absolutely fly. Beautiful.

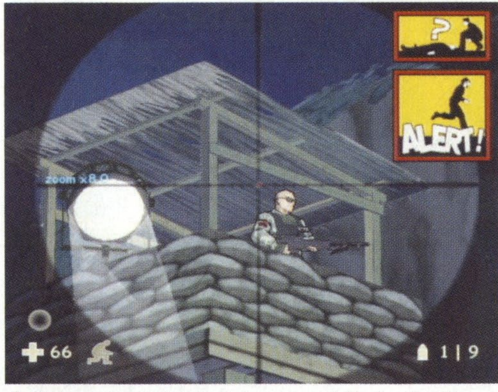


FLASHBACKS

Throughout the game, XIII, the character, gets stacks of flashbacks that reveal bits of his past. You can move around in these too – including this Klan meeting.

△ **The snow is home to death. Including a poor dead skier.**



△ **The game sometimes requires you to hide dead bodies. The top panel shows you someone has discovered a corpse.**



△ **Use the RPG to blow enemies to hell and back and you'll be rewarded, not only with suitable sound effects, but the actual screen shaking. (You can tell by the black border now on show…)**

actual idea of having to change magazines isn't that horrendous, it's simply the amount of time the game takes to do it. Though, admittedly, it may seem like the worst piece of game design in the world when you run out of bullets and then – only seconds later – run out of health too.

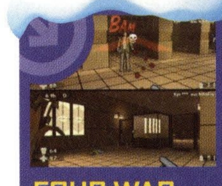
But that little flaw's perhaps not as bad as the one where checkpoints are located so far apart from one another you end up having to replay huge chunks of the game over and over again. A small sweetener might have been the implementation of a cut-scene-slicing button but, unfortunately, you have to sit through repetitious storytelling too.

These two niggles could have been solved easily, but as it stands, the game is instead absolutely rock hard while also being shockingly heartless, cutting you down when you begin to make progress, and ripping the life from you as you stand staring at the very end of the level. Naturally, we like a challenge, but *XIII* often borders on the ridiculous.

There are other lesser problems too, but the game really does retain an amazing hold over you, constantly punching you in the face while rewarding you with newer and more exciting set pieces, as well as some wonderful game design.

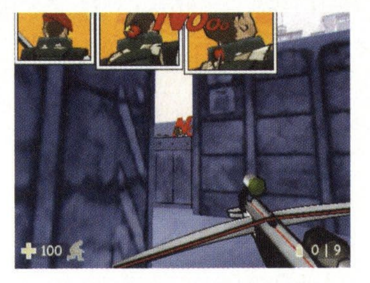
When it works well, *XIII* evokes the spirit of *GoldenEye*, another game that tried to balance spy-based conspiracy, vast levels, big guns and a healthy dose of stealth – and succeeded. Admittedly, it doesn't work as well as Rare's N64 classic at any stage of its considerable life but it's still a notably brave and ambitious stab at a new breed of shooter, albeit one that retains an air of familiarity throughout. Certainly, you'll find yourself unable to forgive *XIII* at points, but eventually you *will* be able to see it for what it is: a flawed gem.

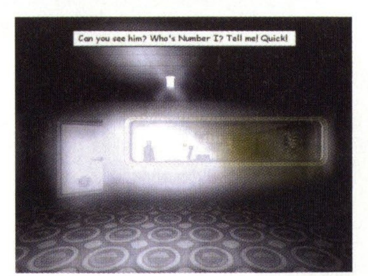
MARCUS HAWKINS



FOUR WAR

Despite the fact that it carries over the flaws from the main game – including inaccurate aiming – multiplayer XIII is actually very impressive indeed. The arenas are small and densely packed with ammo, and some of the additional modes (particularly The Hunt, where you have to chase a singing ghost) are just as good. Four-player games can be a let-down. This isn't.







- Looks amazing.
- Violently fun.
- Massive challenge.
- Great multiplayer.



- Distant checkpoints.
- Wayward aiming.
- Cut-scenes can't be skipped. Annoying.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Metroid Prime
Nintendo
NGC/79 97%
Awesomely playable space-set first-person shooter. Your Gamecube needs this.





9 VISUALS

The occasional bland background, but otherwise sublime.



9 SOUNDS

Fantastic '70s-style soundtrack and great voice acting.



8 MASTERY

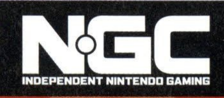
A healthy use of the hardware, though it could be a bit faster.

8 LIFESPAN

A massive game, and a surprisingly adept multiplayer to boot.

VERDICT

Despite some really basic errors, *XIII* is ambitiously big and beautiful, delivering enough of the right stuff to ensure you stick at it. Impressive.



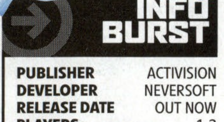


CURRENT GOAL
This lets you know what to do to complete your objective. These can range from collecting items to executing specific tricks in certain places or chasing individuals.

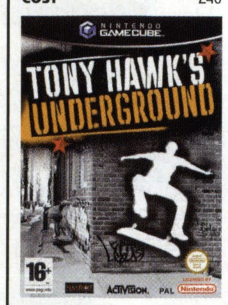
YOUR LOCATION
Rather than skate parks, THUG drops you into a bustling city, where the best skating lines aren't necessarily obvious. Exploring the city and getting to know its layout is the trick to racking up the best scores.

YOU
Rather than picking your skater from a roster of stars, the main mode requires you to create your own skater who'll progress from a nobody to a mega-rich somebody.

THE LOCALS
Any uncompleted objectives can be accessed by exploring the city and looking out for NPCs with an icon hovering over their heads. Talk to them and the goal (as well as a time limit) will be opened.



PUBLISHER	ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER	NEVERSOFT
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	13
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40



TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND

Just keep on trucking! Follow in the footsteps of the Hawkster as the series grinds out another result…



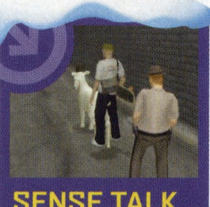
Unlike the 'classic' skate parks of its predecessors, *THUG* takes up a pseudo-free-roaming approach, with sprawling environments populated by *THPS4*-style NPCs for you to seek out and receive challenges from. The biggest difference this time, though, is the structure of the main game. Career mode has been replaced by a more involving Story mode – a welcome addition in that it gives a better sense of purpose to the single-player action.

So, starting out you have to create your own skater. This time round, the customisation options available to you are some of the most comprehensive you'll find in any game, enabling minute details to be tweaked – for example, changing the size of individual muscles. Spend enough time here and it's possible to pull off a pretty good approximation of yourself, something that makes the game that follows all the more absorbing.

SKATE WINSLET

You start off the Story mode at home. A 'famous' skater by the name of Chad Muska's visiting your corner of the ghetto to do a skating demo, and you and your friends are eager to watch.

When you hit the streets for the first time, a number of NPCs will explain the new functions available in the game. To start with, you can now get off your board and walk. Tapping Z sets you off on foot and A enables you to jump, while the shoulder buttons let you grab hold of ledges (an ability that you'll need more than once as *THUG* now includes some rudimentary platforming sections).



SENSE TALK

Maybe, we're just getting old (dude), but much of the dialogue in the game is pretty sickening – and it's made all the more disgusting by the wooden character models and really unenthusiastic voice acting. Just because you're a skater, it doesn't mean you have to sound like a brain-dead reject from the Bill and Ted cast.

Exploring your run-down part of town introduces you to more characters who set you little tasks, such as beating their score on certain trick lines, walking a dog by skitching behind it, learning special tricks and so forth. Eventually you'll be rewarded with the chance to watch the demo, before being introduced to Muska. He sees potential in your skills, and this event sets you off on your path from ghetto trash to international skating superstar.

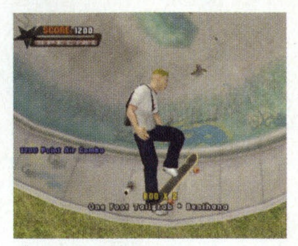
For newcomers to the *Hawk's* series, the initial learning curve is nice and gentle, there's plenty to see, do and explore, while the task is structured patiently enough to let you practise to your heart's content.

Despite the fact that the NPCs' goals and challenges are the main route to furthering your progress through the game, taking time out to practise new

Is the Birdman underground or just buried?



Δ Collecting tasks still feature very heavily in *TH Underground*...



Δ The animation is much improved. You can even...



Δ ...design and name your own tricks. Which is nice.



Δ The environments are sizeable, but they're still rather bland. Still, there's plenty of variety from city to city.

BREAKING OUT OF THE GHETTO

Everyone has to start somewhere...



Rumour has it that Chad Muska is hitting the streets to show of his moves. An eager young skater like you would do well to get in on the act...



Watch him do his stuff and then, as he drives around the 'hood, do your best to impress him by busting sick moves in front of his bonnet.



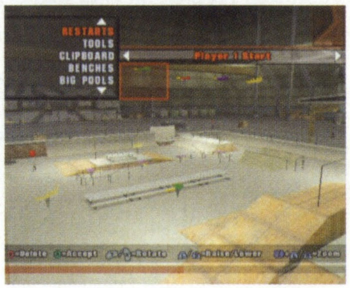
Impress him and it's time to move on to a new city... or rather it would be if you didn't have to save your druggy friend with a spot of needless platforming. (?!?)



Home just ain't safe no more, boy. Better haul ass outta town before them hoodlums gets ya by, er... jumping 40 feet over an iron bridge. Yeah, riiiiight...



Δ Cars are so poorly implemented you wonder why they even bothered.



Δ The park editor. Unfortunately you can't take them online like on PS2.

tricks and find new lines in the environment to exploit is vitally important. Your character's own stats, for example, only grow through practice (rather than you assigning earned points – something that, in our opinion, is a much better system). It makes 'levelling up' your character a more organic, free-flowing process.

BAIL ODDIE

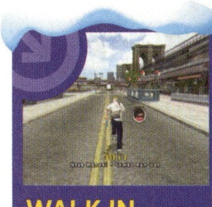
Unfortunately, despite these very welcome additions to the formula, *THUG* fails to achieve greatness on too many levels to be a must-have.

Presentation-wise, the game doesn't reach the kind of heights you'd expect from a title that's been evolving for the last five years or so. The environments, while expansive enough in terms of scale, fail to hit a high level of polish and solidity, which makes the often-jarring frame rate all the more irritating. Furthermore, many of the new additions seem to have diluted the purity of the previous games. The collecting tasks, many of which are easier to accomplish on foot, turn the action away from skating and into an ill-conceived sub-par platformer. The developers have also decided to shoe-horn driving (yes, *driving*) sections into the game using the same engine. These are laughably poor. While we can (just about) excuse the fact that the car you're driving seems totally unconnected to the road surface, we can't excuse the fact that these sections break the flow of the skating action to the point where you'll snap.

We should applaud the fact that *THUG* is attempting something new, because it *mostly* works. But we can't help but feel that, story structure aside, many of the additions are a little weak. Still, fans of the series will find that most of what's on offer here is different enough to warrant giving it a go. If there's one thing it definitely can't be accused of, it's rehashing old ideas in yet another update.

GERAINT EVANS

> **"WE CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL THAT, STORY STRUCTURE ASIDE, MANY OF THE ADDITIONS ARE WEAK"**



WALK IN THE PARK...

The ability to walk is an interesting addition. While it's often implemented badly, the fact that you can incorporate this into your combos is commendable. If you jump off your board, mid-trick, you can walk over to previously unreachable areas. If you get back on your board within the time limit, your combo continues.



- Much improved main Story mode.
- Innovative goals.
- Big environments.



- Lacks polish.
- Poor driving bits.
- Not as pure as previous *Hawk's*.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4
Activision
NGC/75 85%
Expansive, smooth and probably cheaper too.





6 VISUALS

Inconsistent frame rate and bland textures let the side down here.

7 SOUNDS

Depends on your tastes, but there's a good mix of tunes.



6 MASTERY

Well-designed parks, but it's hardly pushing the boat out.

8 LIFESPAN

Loads of customisable aspects, from decks and NPCs to skate parks.

VERDICT

It's a big game with some great new additions that will keep things feeling fresh. Unfortunately it could do with a little more overall polish...







"EA have taken the Quaffle and run with it"

BLUDGING IT

Once you've earned a bludger, flicking Y sends it at the player with the ball. Then you've got a few seconds to steer it into him and avoid the opposition beaters for a chance to drain the opposition's boost.

THREE AGAINST ONE

Team moves are difficult to earn, but absolutely unstoppable. In this case, a tap of Z sends Fred and Ron juggling the bludger through the opposition – but some of the international teams have moves that score two or three goals at once.

SNITCHY & SNATCHY

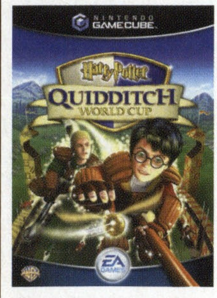
When the two halves of boost meet up, you chase the snitch. The idea's to stay on the yellow path, which builds up boost, and collect bonus bursts of speed. Then tap B to make the save – which, sadly, is yet another preset animation.

BROOM TO MANOEUVRE

You score special goals by getting in the shooting area, then holding L+R+B. There isn't a lot of skill involved, but at least they look nice.



PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	EA
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	1
GBA LINK-UP	YES
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40



HARRY POTTER QUIDDITCH WORLD CUP

Golden balls? This game's got plenty – but none of the magic of the beautiful game…



Let's face it – they might be good at transfiguring mice and growing beards, but when it comes to designing sports, wizards don't have a clue. How else do you explain Quidditch – a sport where unless you score 15 goals, the opposition can always beat you by catching a little winged ball first?

Fair play to EA, though, they've taken the Quaffle and run with it – neatly solving this problem by dividing the game in two. In the first part, you score points (which don't really matter) and build up boost (which matters, but only a bit) by pulling off combo passes, special moves and tackles.

Once the teams' boost bars meet in the middle, it's time to chase the snitch, in a minigame that plays like a really basic *F-Zero*. In the Hogwarts and World Cups, this means you win or lose matches almost at random, but in exhibition mode at least you can ignore the chase and play a mate for points right? Um, right? Actually, no. Though there's a superficially exciting lob 'n' volley combo pass system tacked in there, chucking the ball about feels far too random compared to *ISS* or even *NBA 2003*.

> **"POTTER FANS CERTAINLY WON'T BE DISAPPOINTED BUT EVERYONE ELSE WILL WONDER WHAT ALL THE FUSS IS ABOUT"**

The one thing *Potter* does get right is details. Cho Chang, Oliver Wood and even Bulgarian champ Victor Krum make appearances, with gorgeous stadiums and excellent commentary backing them up. There's even a set of animated 3D Quidditch cards to collect and trade via the GBA link option. *Potter* fans certainly won't be disappointed, but everyone else is likely to wonder what all the fuss is about.

JOEL SNAPE



- Great commentary.
- Impressive stadiums.
- Makes sense. Sort of.
- Nice magic cards.



- Made-up sport.
- Inaccurate passing.
- Pretty limited.
- Arbitrary victories.



Harry Potter & The Chamber of Secrets
EA
NGC/75 78%
It's less spectacular but perfect for Potterphiles



8 VISUALS

Great film-based cartoon likenesses although it sometimes gets too hectic.

9 SOUNDS

Soaring music, excellent commentary from Lee Jordan, Ludo Bagman & co

5 MASTERY

Surely they could have worked special moves into the flow of play?

5 LIFESPAN

It's just a matter of playing the World Cup with a very different team.

VERDICT

We've made up better games involving elastic bands and office chairs. A treat for Quidditch lovers but proper sports fans'd be better off with basketball.





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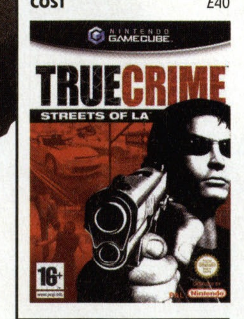


"You're cop on the edge, busting perp ass"

△ Looks exciting but – thanks to the auto-aim – isn't. After dying while trying to actually aim at the bad guys yourself, you soon learn that you can just keep hammering the fire button and your gunsights will seek out targets for you. Cheers...

INFO BURST

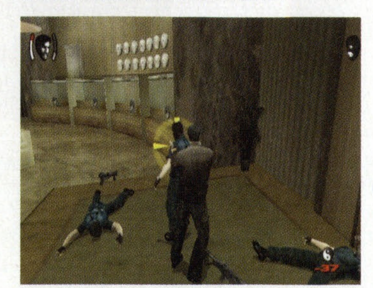
PUBLISHER	ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER	LUXOFLUX
RELEASE DATE	21ST NOV
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	5
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40



TRUE CRIME STREETS OF L.A.



△ Missions where enemies give chase are fun. Loose 'em in the traffic.



△ Those'd better be bad guys you just took out – or it's Bad Cop status for you.

Buying True Crime? Well, do you feel lucky today punk? I mean, *really* lucky?



Although your 'Cube has a wealth of exclusive, brilliant games at its disposal, chart-topper *GTA: Vice City* isn't one of them. This leaves the way clear for *True Crime: Streets of LA* – like *GTA* but smoother, more detailed and better looking, with Christopher Walken on board and original recordings by the likes of Snoop Dogg featuring on the soundtrack.

It's even got a new take on the theme: you're a good guy – albeit a 'cop on the edge' 'busting perp ass' using 'unconventional methods'. You get the picture. You drive (or run if you're stupid), round the streets of LA, taking in racetrack-like freeways, acres of suburban sprawl and countless dingy enclaves of crime, populated by people who just don't want to get along. Your radio dispatcher tells you what's up and a red dot on your radar shows the location of the crime – usually just a couple of blocks away. You choose whether to be a hero, or ignore it and lash through the game at speed. It might be a street brawl, a gang shootout or a rioting mob of swindled stockbrokers. There are hostages to save, escaped convicts at large and a vampire driving round in an ambulance full of stolen blood.



MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

Most spot crimes are impossible to complete without going into the Bad Guy red. A gang of drug dealers in an SUV! You kill one of them and arrest another despite being shot at repeatedly by his mate who is then hit by a passing truck. Total score +1, minus four pedestrians you killed during the chase and shoot out: -3. Why did you bother?

KARATE COP

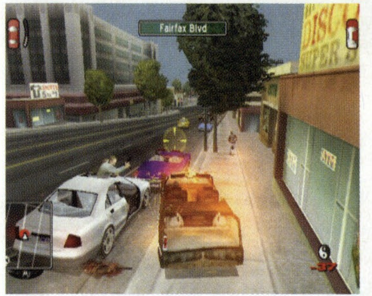
The driving stuff we've seen before but the hand-to-hand combat borders on beat-'em-up levels of complexity and the shooting part plays like old arcade favourite *Virtua Cop*. Initially you'll take pleasure in steaming your car into rioters or mowing down a mugger but then you realise the heavy implication of the Good Cop/Bad Cop meter...

TRUE CRIME

Murder but no mayhem



△ The game has some erm... adult themes. Be prepared for a city chockful of ladies 'of the night' and um... exotic dancers. You've obviously disturbed this young lady at ballet class...



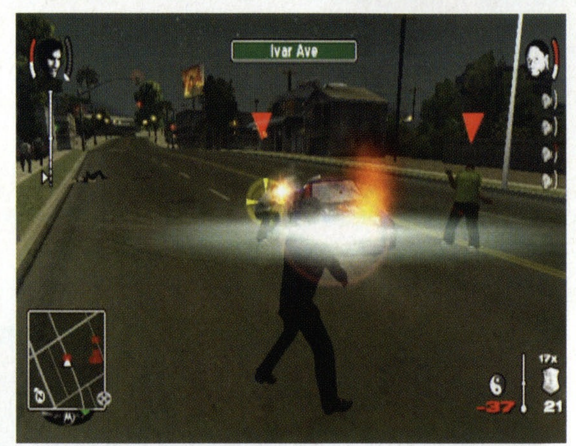


△ The persistance of enemies can be infuriating. There's little AI involved , they're just programmed to keep shooting you in the face until you fall over. Thanks a bunch.





△ Up yours, Grandma! We can beat up strippers and nick cars!



△ At last – an opportunity to finally arrest some people. Now if only they'd keep still. And not shoot you. And not run away. Wah!



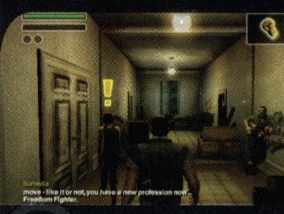
- Good looks.
- Great sound.
- Hollywood movie atmosphere.



- Short missions.
- Messy camerawork.
- Frustratingly fiddly gameplay.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Freedom Fighters
EA
NGC/86 83%
Lots of realistic gunplay but far less haphazard and therefore more rewarding



8 VISUALS

Sharp and smooth. Some pop-up but it looks great in all three game modes

9 SOUNDS

Great music and plenty of cheesy action-movie-style dialogue

6 MASTERY

Doing all the right things but doing them in an infuriatingly fiddly way

7 LIFESPAN

It's big – but only if you indulge it and at least try to play the game properly

VERDICT

A great free-roaming crime game (and the only one out on Gamecube) but almost impossible to enjoy properly, thanks to its insane strictness.





IT'S FOUR GAMES IN ONE! SORT OF...

Look! True Crime really has got the lot. Why buy any other game? Ever!



DRIVING!

You're given a car that you can upgrade by indulging in street races but you're free to car-jack, sorry 'borrow', anyone else's car whenever you fancy.



SHOOTING!

Either pull the R-Trigger and let the auto-aim do the work or pull and hold it to go to aim mode. The game goes all bullet-time slo-mo while you do it too.



FIGHTING!

Why not just shoot them? Well that would make the fighting system with grapples, high and low kicks and punches redundant, wouldn't it?



LOADING!

Why does the game have to save after every little thing? You'll also spend plenty of time on the mission tree, sussing which missions you need to complete.

To stop you from trivialising the business of law enforcement by killing as many pedestrians as criminals you lose a point for every person you 'accidentally' kill. Points are only gained for successful arrests – so parking your car on someone's head won't win you any applause. Progress through the game is only available if you finish with a positive Good Cop rating. Oh no...

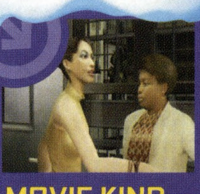
The only 'easy' crimes are arresting muggers and that involves chasing them (being *veeery* careful not to hit them too hard with the car) beating them up and pressing the Arrest button once they loose consciousness. Problem is, fights can go on for a few minutes and while it's tempting to cap them in the foot mid-brawl you'll more often effortlessly shoot them dead – and a couple of blokes in the background too (sorry!). Result is that for every point gained you often loose two. Suddenly the game isn't a free-roaming toybox of illegal joy but a nut-achingly tense test of nerve, patience and thumb agility.

"INITIALLY YOU'LL ENJOY MOWING DOWN MUGGERS BUT THEN YOU REALISE THE IMPLCATIONS OF THE GOOD COP/BAD COP METER"

Trying to recover from the -20 Bad Cop deficit you've notched up a few missions in will take you a month of repeatedly singling out 'easy' crimes and not so much *playing* the game as *tricking it* with your persistence. The only real solution is to start again and play as if your real life depended on it. Of course, you can just do what you like but you'll shunted to the Bad Ending and only see about a third of the game.

The actual missions themselves are painfully short: Kill The Sniper! Blam, blam, blam, blam (let the auto-targeting do the work) and it's a lengthy save... then a lengthy load... Drive to the next location! Do the bare minimum and there's a chance that you'll spend more time looking at menu screens than you will playing it. Sure, it's big, sure it's clever but when you play it it's like having Christopher Walken 'bustin' your bwalls'. Case closed. Verdict: suicide.

DAN GRIFFITHS

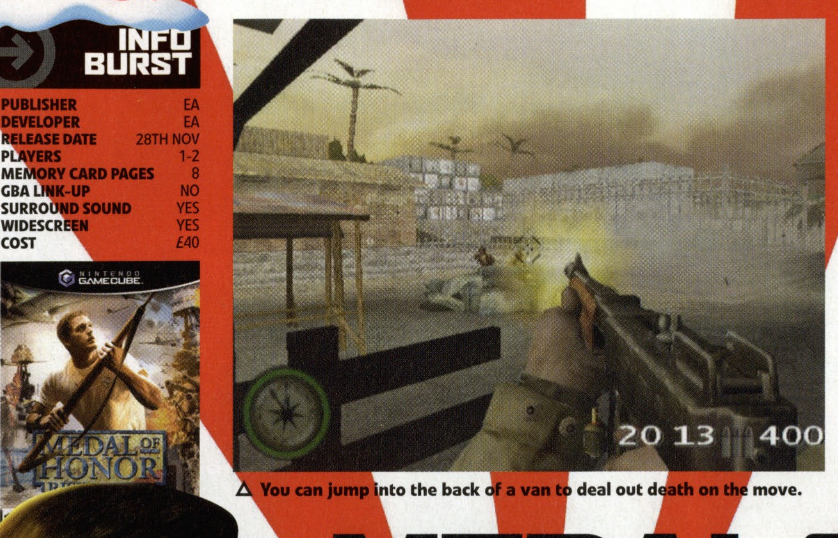


MOVIE KIND OF LOVE

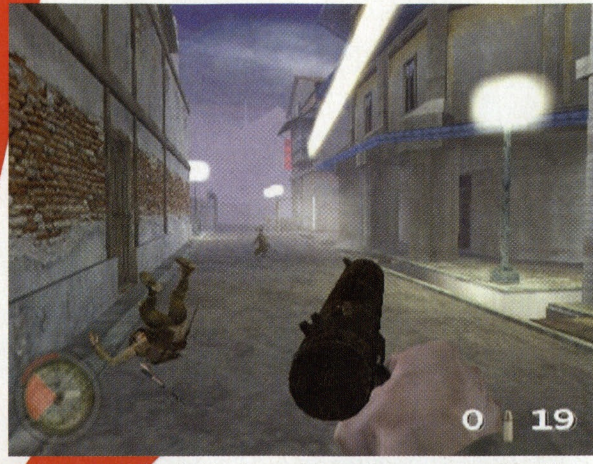
There's loads of great movie-style cut-scenes, all done with the game engine. You play Nick Kang who ultimately has to kill all the Triad/Russian bad guys to avenge his dead father, please his ball-busting FBI boss and win the affections of his sexy-but-grumpy female partner. Look, no-one said it was gonna be original, OK?

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	EA
RELEASE DATE	28TH NOV
PLAYERS	1-2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	8
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40



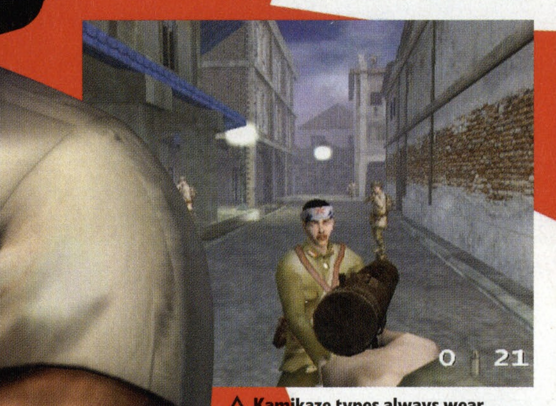
△ You can jump into the back of a van to deal out death on the move.



△ A grey and inhospitable place and the natives aren't very friendly.

MEDAL OF HONOR RISING SUN

EA's latest WWII shooter forgets to put the gun into gung-ho...



△ Kamikaze types always wear headbands. Approach with caution!



△ Targeting is fiddly at the best of times and bullets can often miss targets, even at point-blank range.

Medal of Honor: Rising Sun looks so old it should come packaged with a 'retro' warning and a bag of Werther's Originals. That may sound like a harsh way to begin a review of a game that follows on from a series of award-winning titles, but there's no escaping the visual imperfections in this installment.

It's also been promoted on the back of one scene. Namely the dazzling opening sequence set in Pearl Harbor, 1941. This level sees you battling your way out of a sinking ship while the Japanese do what they always do best in American war movies: shout 'Tora! Tora! Tora!' after sneaking a fleet of air-craft carriers past clueless US military radar operators. Unfortunately, once you've experienced this rousing opening level it's all downhill. Call us cynical, but it's as if EA expended all its efforts on producing this powerful introduction then ran out of ideas for the rest of the gameplay.



JOY RIDES

At designated points in the game you can climb into the back of vehicles. Often you'll be pursued by running soldiers – a nice touch – and on one occasion a tank. Press the 'Z' button to lob grenades at its hull - the only effective way to stop it launching a deadly artillery round in your sorry mush.

KWAI THE LONG FACE?

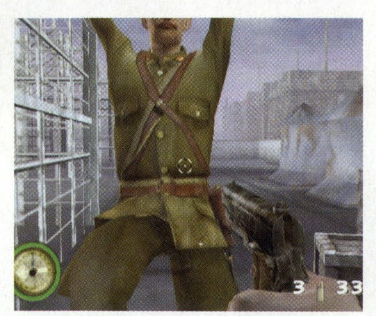
As the title suggests, *Rising Sun* pits you against the might of the Japanese Empire during several famous battles in WWII. Locations include a raid on Guadalcanal, the infiltration of an embassy in Singapore and a battle on the Bridge over the river Kwai.

The characterisation in the game is hardly subtle; in fact some might say it's bordering on racist. You've got Kamikaze, sword-wielding enemies, Japanese cooks expelling expletives and throwing knives with equal gusto and dumb foot-soldiers that jump around on the spot if you shoot them

Δ This machine gun is great for mowing down hoards of enemies but reloading takes ages.



Δ Medicinal canteens are often dropped by foes, so avoiding combat is not encouraged.



Δ It's either you or him. Don't let the sword-wielding maniac get this close!



Δ Shooting enemies at this distance is impossible unless you have a rifle with a sniper scope.

BLOCKBUSTER OPENING SEQUENCE

Here's a taste of the best part of the game, mainly because it doesn't feature Ben Affleck.



RUDE AWAKENING

As you get out of your bunk bed, those banging noises can only mean one thing: the pesky Japanese have entered WWII with a devastating surprise attack.



LURCHING SHIP

The camera tilts and shakes as you make your way to the upper deck. This is an even better opening than the D-Day landing in Medal of Honor: Frontline.



RING OF FIRE

Fire in the hold, quite literally! Grab the nearby fire extinguisher and press the action button to douse those raging flames. In the midst of all the confusion you can make your escape.



AA GUN

Once up on the main deck you need to man the artillery gun to shoot down as many enemy Japanese planes as possible. It's a big gun for a big job. Good luck.



SEA CHANGE

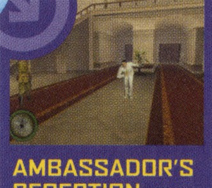
However well you do, the ship will be destroyed in the end so it's into the drink for your only chance of survival. A pretty bad way to start the day by anyone's standards.

in the legs. We hazard a guess this won't go down too well in your typical Tokyo shopping precinct.

The *Medal of Honor* series has always favoured scripting over emergent gameplay, so it's no surprise that *Rising Sun* channels you down clearly defined avenues. Apart from the occasional 'city' scenario where you can explore about three houses (big deal), the levels are more linear than a post office queue. Usually, the advantage of scripting is that you can win over the player with a powerful narrative, creating suspense and atmosphere to hook them in. A clever script can be the difference between early boredom and hours of gameplay. But the problem with *Rising Sun* (with the exception of the Pearl Harbor level), is that there's no narrative drive.

Actually, that's a bit of a lie. If you consider a poorly animated ally who looks like he's talking with a sausage in his mouth (they say 'follow me' a lot) good plot exposition, then *Rising Sun* won't offend you too much. But neither will it engage you or keep your attention. Pressing the Start button

> **"RISING SUN CHANNELS YOU DOWN CLEARLY DEFINED AVENUES. IT'S MORE LINEAR THAN A POST OFFICE QUEUE"**



AMBASSADOR'S RECEPTION

Steal a uniform and you can safely enter the embassy in Singapore. Objectives include poisoning the food in the kitchen, taking a photo of the ambassador's mistress and stealing Ferrero Rochés. Actually, that would be too imaginative – you just have to shoot people.



Δ This daft chap is trying to skewer you with his bayonet. He'd be a lot more successful if his AI was any good – one of the game's main failings.

"At least it has bags of atmosphere"

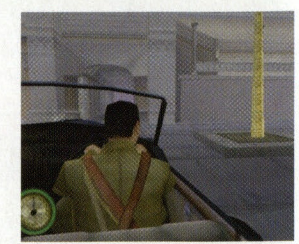


△ There are very few good set-pieces in *Rising Sun*. The game mostly consists of a procession of stupid enemies standing in front of barrels of explosive material. Moving from side to side will ensure you avoid most of the bullets.

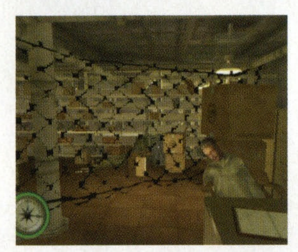


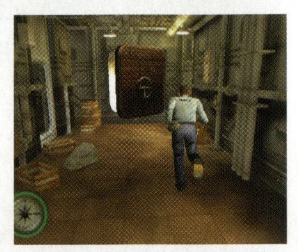
△ Unfortunately, little of the environment takes damage or explodes.





△ Steal a uniform before being driven into a secret hotel location.





△ Pearl Harbor kicks it all off, and the race through your battleship is the most exciting part of the game. Shut the door on your way out.



△ You'll have to get close to use the shotgun effectively.



△ That's it! One blast to the chest and he's animating pain.



△ Danger is indicated by red triangles on your compass.

brings up your mission objectives and as long as you follow the breadcrumbs to the next save point you can't go wrong.

Good luck finding those save points, by the way. They're atrociously spaced out and, in some cases, hidden from view altogether. In a game so hell-bent on channelling you down restrictive avenues, it seems a strange decision to hide save stations down a foxhole or behind some leaves. The problem being that if you miss a save and subsequently get killed, you end up playing up to half an hour of a level all over again.

And, because it's as carefully scripted as a politician's speech, you'll be shooting the same enemies in exactly the same places *all over again*.

At least *Rising Sun* has bags of atmosphere, due to the terrific music and audio. Indeed, this is one of the first games to be created in the THX Certified Development Environment. Hear the rumble of a tank and if your sound is turned up loud enough your neighbours will think their back garden's being bulldozed. Enter one of the game's jungles and the manifold chirruping really emphasises a sense of place. The musical score is magnificent and can be lofty, menacing or soothing depending on the situation.

"THE MUSICAL SCORE IS MAGNIFICENT AND CAN BE LOFTY, MENACING OR SOOTHING DEPENDING ON THE SITUATION"



CUT TO THE QUICK

After every mission you'll be 'treated' to a cut-scene. In all honesty, these are truly appalling and well beneath the usual EA standards. Muddy colours and pixellation make them look like a 6th form programming project and they fail to make a disjointed mission structure flow better.

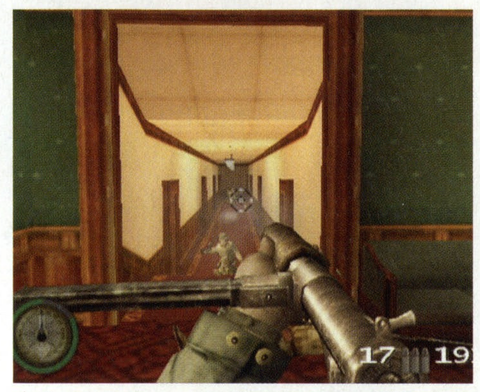
GRUMBLE IN THE JUNGLE

It's therefore a great pity that *Rising Sun* undermines its evocative atmosphere with visuals reminiscent of a six year-old N64 title.

The textures, for instance, are bland beyond belief and in some areas the colour palate ranges only from off-beige to deep brown. Sure, we appreciate that jungles aren't supposed to look as startling as a Dulux colour chart, but when you keep banging into blurry walls of 'leaves' exploration soon becomes tiresome in the extreme.



Δ Your own allies will fight with the enemy, but it's a bit like watching two blindfolded idiots wrestling.



Δ Duck down by pressing the 'B' button and this will help you dodge bullets, but your movement will be slow.

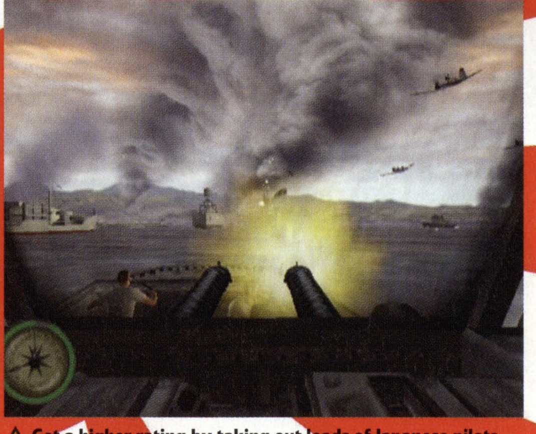


CRAP JUNGLE?

The jungles sometimes provide an illusion of choice, if only briefly. But we're talking a 'shall I go around this hedgerow, or take the left path towards the brown bush?' kind of complexity. It's the dodgy visuals and poor textures that will get you lost rather than any kind of labyrinthine level structure. Not even Chris Ryan could survive long in this ugly habitation without some thick sun glasses.



Δ Chuck a few grenades to kill this ancient tank.



Δ Get a higher rating by taking out loads of Japanese pilots.

There *are* some high points in the game to keep FPS fans contented. Battling your way up a hill heavily guarded by gun emplacements (clearly inspired by the movie Hamburger Hill) and donning a disguise to enter the Singaporean embassy provides a welcome change of pace. But in general the missions are uninspired.

Furthermore, enemies don't have personality or sophisticated AI, they just move from side to side like constipated penguins.

HONOR KEBAB

Occasionally allies will fight alongside you, presumably to add a sense of epic scale to the battles. But their behaviour is just as broken as the enemies you encounter. Sometimes you can sit back and watch as your men fight Japanese enemies toe-to-toe in a belligerent salsa of incompetence, missing each other with hilarious regularity. One thing's for sure; you'll have to finish things off if you're going to make any kind of progress.

In truth, things improve marginally later on. There are some impressive temple locales and the grandiose architecture does a better job of framing the action than the earlier, shabby jungle interiors.

If you're a die-hard FPS fan then *Rising Sun'll* probably engage you until the very end. The game doesn't take long to complete but there are plenty of additional challenges and medals to gain if you feel compelled to complete missions again.

The main problem is that there are far better FPSs on the market than this. Even the multiplayer and cooperative modes fail to significantly enhance the package. Because the visuals are so squalid, it's hard to make out where you're supposed to go or what you're shooting when you only have half a screen to view.

RISING DAMP

Ultimately this is disappointing effort from EA, a company we usually rely on for high production values and solid gameplay (just take a look at the enhancemens they've made to *SSX* and *The Lord of the Rings* this year) *Rising Sun* is by no means a disaster, but the clockwork game design, poor save structure and cheerless visuals failed to excite us.

Don't be taken in by the magnificent music and atmospheric sound effects. This is more a case of a fallen icon than a *Rising Sun*.

MARK WALBANK

BULLET TIME

As you'd expect – no, demand – there are loads of gun emplacements spread around the levels for you to use. Problem is, using one merely triggers a prescripted event that sends a ton of enemies your way. Best ignore them and save the hassle. Yes.



- Atmospheric music.
- Earth-trembling sound effects.
- Great opening sequence.



- Badly structured.
- Bland visuals.
- Dumb enemies.
- Dumb allies.



Medal of Honor: Frontline
EA
NGC/75 74%
Much better balanced FPS, thick with battle atmosphere and with more interesting missions.



5 VISUALS
Poor by today's standards with bland textures and drab colours.

9 SOUNDS
Excellent explosions and background noises, and a brilliant soundtrack.



4 MASTERY
Feels like it's been ported to the Gamecube as an afterthought.

7 LIFESPAN
Extra challenges and a co-op mode give it some replay value.

VERDICT

Apart from the opening sequence this fails to get the pulse racing and never feels like it's going to blow you away. EA need to go back to the drawing board.



NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING

67

"Bash, bash, bash, bash, bash"



△ There are loads of crates to hurl at the bad guys. Much of the scenery is destructible too.



△ These fellas have gas grenades that send the screen all trippy and weird.



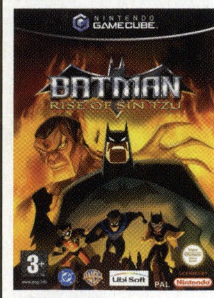
△ At the end of each level you can use your points to buy throws and combos.



△ The better you fight, the more points you get to spend later.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	UBI SOFT
DEVELOPER	UBI SOFT
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	3
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40



BATMAN
RISE OF SIN TZU

Third time lucky? Don't be daft. You didn't *really* think this would be any good. Did you?

It's strange how the most putrid of gaming experiences *cough Batman: Dark Tomorrow cough* can twist your perception of something like this. Five minutes into *Batman: Rise of Sin Tsu*, the inevitable crowds gather around to laugh at its ineptitude. "It's not that bad…" says the rather optimistic reviewer in its defence. The truth, of course, is that it's only 'not that bad' when placed up against Kemco's DC-licensed travesty.

Unlike that unspeakable slice of filth, Ubi Soft's effort is based around the (actually pretty good) animated series. Again, much like *Vengeance*, the developers have done a pretty good job of emulating the atmosphere and stylised look of the series. Batman fans, then, will be happy as far as this aspect is concerned. Unfortunately, fans of varied and interesting gameplay most certainly won't be.

Sin Tsu is an out-and-out brawler. You pick a character (Batman, Bat Girl, Robin etc) and head out onto the streets of Gotham, where you're immediately set upon by a bunch of spookily similar (read: *identical*) goons. From here on in it's a case of bash, bash, bash, bash, bash. There is a range of different moves to use (and, indeed, unlock), but why bother when the most efficient way to finish off your foes is to repeatedly use the same cycle of attacks over and over again?

Granted, there are exceptions to this rule – some of the stronger enemies are able to block attacks – but ultimately, the best way to dispatch these enemies is to employ a relentlessly samey, and consequently tedious, attack pattern.

From level to level you'll find that the location you're scrapping in changes, the objective dresses itself up as being different and the enemies' appearance alters, but you're never really doing anything different.

This kind of repetition, even if it does have a mildly amusing co-operative mode, just doesn't cut it any more.

GERAINT EVANS



- Visually true to the animated series.
- Entertaining for five minutes or so.



- Only entertaining for five minutes or so.
- So repetitive it borders on criminal.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Batman Vengeance
Ubi Soft
NGC/67 70%
Platform adventure based on the same series. Clearly better than *Sin Tzu*.



5 VISUALS
Competent enough, we suppose, but never anything more.

5 SOUNDS
Get down to the Bat-Funk. Ker-pow. Ker-smack. Ker-rap.

4 MASTERY
It's smooth, it's not exactly shoddy, but it's just so, so *dull*.

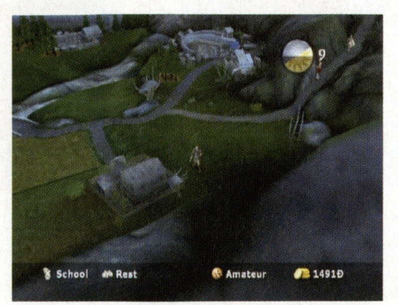
3 LIFESPAN
Don't mind pressing 'Y' for an eternity? This will last forever, then.

VERDICT

Would have been fairly decent in an arcade 15 years ago, but these days this kind of thing simply isn't good enough. A rental, then, at the very most.







△ Random encounters appear on the map.



△ You can buy in new recruits for the school.



△ Strategic elements like plotting efficient routes to foes and intercepting incoming attacks are an absorbing part of the game.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER	LUCASARTS
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	5
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40

NINTENDO GAMECUBE
GLADIUS
12+



△ The attack animations are one of the game's poorer points. However, as these are purely cosmetic, it really doesn't affect the game as such, only the atmosphere of the fights.



△ Using the scenery defensively or to get a height advantage becomes increasingly important as the game gets tougher.



GLADIUS

Murderous woman beating and greasy, barbarous puppy slaying…

Take other turn-based battle games like *Advance Wars* as an example. Basic, well-designed and accessible battle interfaces sit on top of a wealth of unit options, attacks and, as a result, near infinite possibilities for defeating the enemy. You know where you stand 100% of the time, both in terms of your capabilities on the battlefield and the reasons behind your victories and defeats.

In comparison to these superbly engaging titles, *Gladius* is a total shambles. The long drawn-out tutorial battles certainly teach you the basics, but by the time you're thrown into the thick of the action, executing any kind of solid strategy seems an impossibility. Why on earth do the gladiators in your crack team have trouble stepping over dead bodies in order to carry out a perfectly reasonable course of action? Why is a well-placed unit forced to waste valuable moves in order to reach a destination that should pose little problem? These are niggling issues that, in conjunction with the game's almost laughable presentation (like the horribly wooden animation) are extremely offputting. So much so that it's doubtful you will want to persevere.

LOST THE PLOT

In order to make the whole turn-based battle thing a bit more engaging, LucasArts have a great deal of narrative that drives the story forward. Unfortunately, the beautifully drawn artwork that appears from time to time soon gives way to some horribly stilted dialogue between the various character models. Rubbish.

GLADIUS TO BE HERE

It's a crying shame, really, because at *Gladius'* heart are some rather enjoyable elements. The fighting system is certainly praiseworthy. Each character can move a certain distance across the



THE ARENA
You need to be aware of where your characters are in relation to their surroundings. Raised areas give an advantage over lowly characters. You can negate any disadvantage a particular unit has by moving your character to higher ground.

STATS
You've gotta love those numbers. The data floating out of everyone's heads gives you information about what's going on during the battle – including odd data like "I think they like me… maybe it's the gown." (We have no idea what's going on there.)

MIX AND MATCH
Heavy units are weak against light units who in turn are weak against medium units. Each weight class has its own unit types, from long-range support fighters to close-range brutes wielding maces.

YOUR FIGHTERS
These make up your gladiatorial school. Winning battles earns them EXP. You also get job points to allow you to develop individual skills like Magic.



△ **Various tournaments ease you into the action.**

△ **As you progress the arenas get more lavish.**

△ **The swingometer is a nice skillful addition.**

arena floor – this is indicated by a dotted arrow that you can drag around the battlefield. Once they're in range, units can access various attacks at various ranges, all of which, much like the unit type, are effective against different targets.

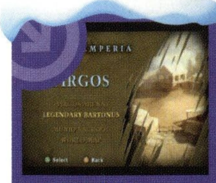
So it's a case of matching your units and attacks to the best possible target. This means making use of terrain to gain a height advantage and so forth. When you're not engaged in bashing people's heads in, there are the usual myriad options open to you. You can recruit temporary or permanent members to your school of gladiators. You can kit them out in a massive range of items, weapons and armour and you assign various skill points to your characters to give them individual abilities to exploit on the battlefield.

This of course is nothing particularly new, but *Gladius* has a number of unique features. The strength of an attack on your opponent, for example, has to be earned through perfect timing on a golf-style swingometer or speedy input of certain button combos, both elements that add an interesting element of skill to the battles. The way the game progresses is also unique. You start with a small school of gladiators who you have to train up. You can recruit new members with different abilities in order to broaden your range of fighters, and from here you travel the land, competing in gladiatorial leagues and tournaments.

During the battles you'll see your popularity rise and fall with your successes and defeats, and this popularity subsequently allows you access to new quests and battles.

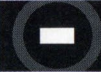
Developing favourite characters and watching your rise through increasingly more opulent amphitheatres does, with enough dedication, make the initial flaws pale into insignificance. If you have the patience to sit through the game's rather tedious opening stages then, you'll find a huge and ultimately rewarding strategy title.

GERAINT EVANS



ENCORE
As a gladiator, it's your role to entertain the crowd as much as it is to batter men and women into a bloody pulp. Fight well and the crowd will cheer for you, boosting your motivation in a battle. Fight well across a number of leagues and tournaments and your local popularity will soar, allowing you to fight in even harder battles for even greater rewards.

"WHY DO YOUR GLADIATORS HAVE TROUBLE STEPPING OVER DEAD BODIES IN ORDER TO CARRY OUT A REASONABLE ACTION?"



- A huge game with lots to get through.
- Very rewarding.
- Unique features.

–

- Horrid presentation.
- Clumsy interface.
- Takes ages to get going properly.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Final Fantasy Tactics
Square-Enix
NGC/87 91%
A huge, in-depth GBA strategy masterpiece that'll consume your very soul.



4 VISUALS
A real dog's dinner of ropy animation and character models.



6 SOUNDS
Nothing special. Some speech and, er, some trumpets.

6 MASTERY
Poorly designed opening stages really let the side down.

8 LIFESPAN
There's stack here to get to grips with. You won't finish it quickly.

VERDICT
Persevere with this one. Get through the first few hours and you'll find that this is a unique strategy game with plenty to offer.







"Doesn't do enough to keep us interested"


△ The game kicks off with a battle.


△ Mirkwood – a classic location.


△ There's probably more to keep you going in the main quest than in *Return of the King* – but that has replayability.

THE HOBBIT

Baggins is back! At last! Yes, yes, YES! Aaah, look at the hairy little man with his glowing sword…

Okay, here's the deal: Vivendi own the rights to the Tolkien novels, while EA own the rights to New Line's movies. While EA's games reflect the dark, gritty nature of the film trilogy perfectly, Vivendi – or rather developers Inevitable Studios, who brought *Defender* into the 21st century on Gamecube – have chosen the cute, colourful route to bringing Bilbo Baggins to life in 'the prelude to The Lord of the Rings'. While some of us think it works well, others think it's *sooo* last year.

There are certainly some nice touches to the gameplay, though. The way you can sneak about unnoticed while wearing the ring. The way in which action sequences blend with the RPG elements. The way that the characters and locations from the book have been brought to life. It's all strung together pretty well.

But you'll soon tire of some of its more irritating game conventions – clichés along the lines of not being allowed to leave your own house until you've found your stick. Jumping around in flower bushes until a piece of treasure pops out. The element we've always had doubts about when we looked at *The Hobbit*, namely the battling, is frankly *still tedious*. There's no subtlety to the fights. They're uninspiring. EA know how to do they hacky-slashy group thing much better.

Yes, it's competent – but on a system with the greatest adventure game in the world (er… *Zelda*), games trying to compete – or at least doff their caps in recognition – need to work a bit harder than on other systems. This just doesn't do enough to keep us interested.

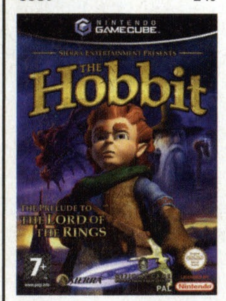
MARCUS HAWKINS

"THE BATTLING IS STILL TEDIOUS. THERE'S NO SUBTLETY TO THE FIGHTS. THEY'RE UNINSPIRING"


△ It's a less tense/frightening/exciting tale than *LOTR* – hence the visual style.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	VIVENDI
DEVELOPER	INEVITABLE
RELEASE DATE	28TH NOV
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	41
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40




- Classic story.
- Mix of styles.
- Plenty of subquests.


- Fighting's dull.
- You've seen a lot of this done before.
- Uninspiring.

IF YOU LIKE THIS…

ZELDA: WIND WAKER
Nintendo
NGC/79 97%
This is how to do the 'cute' thing with aplomb. It's also the best game on GC.





6 VISUALS
They're not going to take your breath away, but not bad.

6 SOUNDS
Exactly what you'd expect a game like this to sound like.

4 MASTERY
Not particularly doing anything new or innovative. Shame.

7 LIFESPAN
It's pretty big, all right, and there's plenty to do. But… it's a bit dull.


VERDICT
Not offensive, but not captivating either. There's a lot of tedious wandering and the fights aren't the high points they should be. Mmm… okay.





PRINCE OF PERSIA
THE SANDS OF TIME™

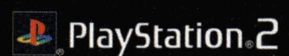
GAME BOY ADVANCE

Control time. It's the ultimate power. But use it wisely. Rewind time to escape death. Freeze time and your enemies during combat. Look ahead of time to plan future moves. We'd all take more risks if we could control time.

GAME BOY ADVANCE

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△ The TIE Hunter is a great new spaceship. Hell yeah.

△ The Speeder Bike sections are only any good when played from the first-person view. The camera's awful from the external view and it's just, well, dull.

INFO BURST	
PUBLISHER	ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER	FACTOR 5
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	5
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40

STAR WARS ROGUE SQUADRON 3 REBEL STRIKE

Better than Rogue Leader? Rebel Strike walks a fine line between brilliant and boring…

Rebel Strike can be tremendous fun. And it looks *incredible*. Why, then, is it a disappointment? Because it's maddeningly uneven. For everything it does well – and in places it builds on the best bits of its predecessor, *Rogue Leader*, brilliantly – there's a literally pedestrian equivalent that is heart-rending in comparison. It is by turns sublime and tedious, when it should be consistently great. The problem is that developers Factor 5 have shot themselves in the face by introducing on-foot levels.

We were never convinced that they'd add anything to *Rebel Strike* and we were right to be sceptical. They are, without question, *no fun*. Impressively animated, yes, but tiresome. You simply run around and hammer the A button to fire; you can duck, and roll, but you'll never need to. There's no skill involved with these sections and they offer a brain-deadening lack of thrills. There are too many of them and, in all honesty, they're only enjoyable in that they're intercut with DVD-quality footage from the original three Star Wars movies.

They're best summed up by the new Hoth level, which is decidedly inferior to the equivalent mission in *Rogue Leader*.

LOVELY LEGS

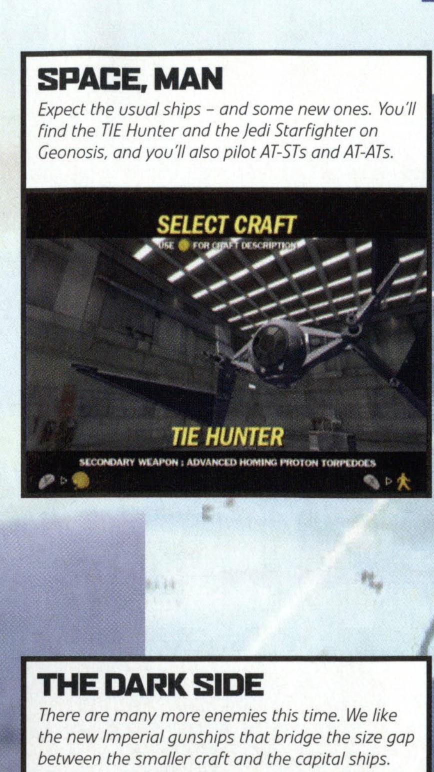
Three levels – Extraction from Ralltir, Guns of Dubrillion and Triumph of the Rebellion – see you piloting an AT-ST. Initially this is top fun (the cockpit view is great) but the novelty soon wanes as the walkers are slooow, and take an age to turn. Guns of Dubrillion even lets you get inside an AT-AT for a short period. It's not as much fun as you might think…

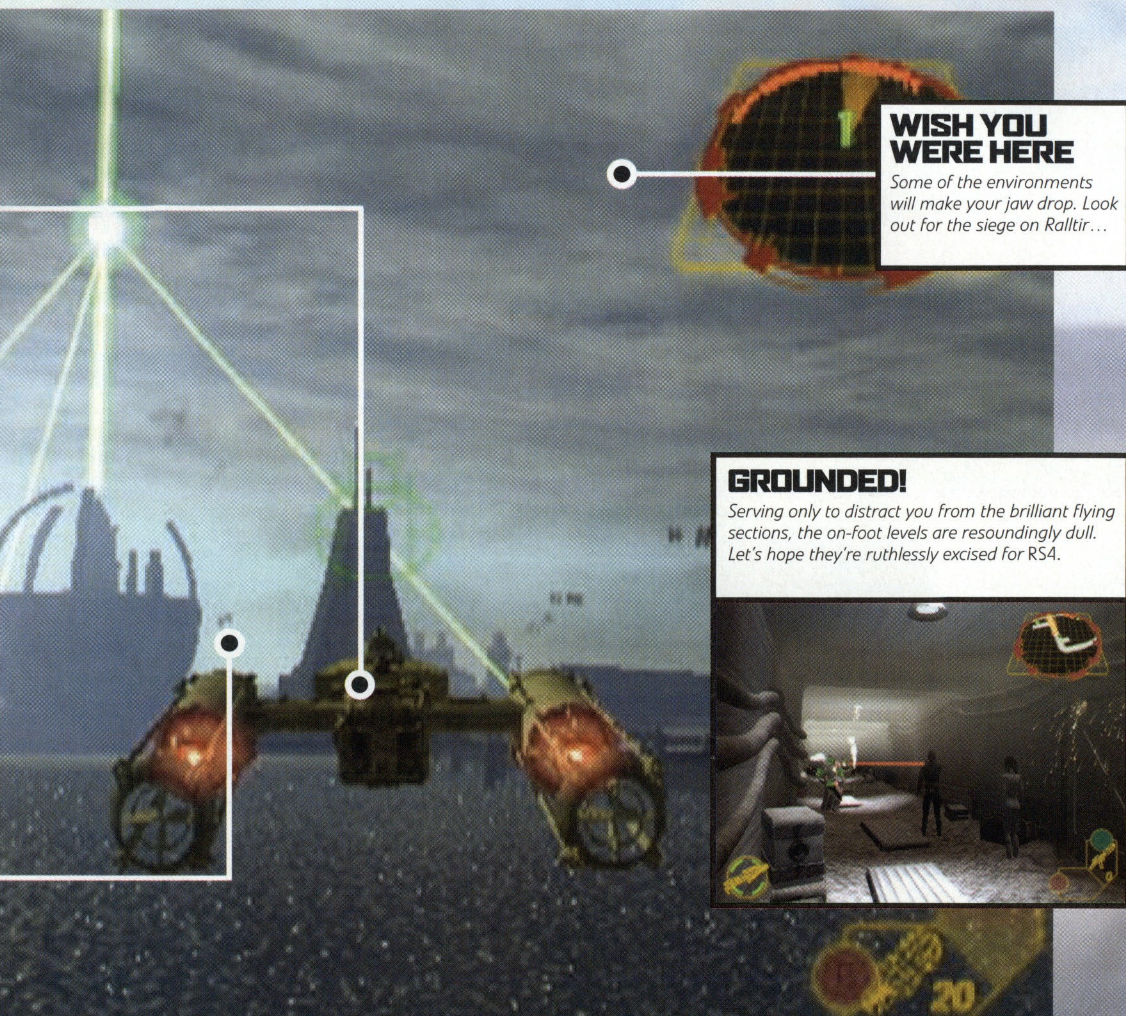
ROGUE SQUADRON 3: REBEL STRIKE

Sometimes rebelling, sometimes revolting

SPACE, MAN

Expect the usual ships – and some new ones. You'll find the TIE Hunter and the Jedi Starfighter on Geonosis, and you'll also pilot AT-STs and AT-ATs.





WISH YOU WERE HERE

Some of the environments will make your jaw drop. Look out for the siege on Ralltir…

THE DARK SIDE

There are many more enemies this time. We like the new Imperial gunships that bridge the size gap between the smaller craft and the capital ships.

GROUNDED!

Serving only to distract you from the brilliant flying sections, the on-foot levels are resoundingly dull. Let's hope they're ruthlessly excised for RS4.

OUT CLOUD

There's a good selection of bonus levels to open up. Flight From Bespin might start with a dull on-foot chase but it ends up with a soundly pleasing dogfight below the cloud city itself. And your ship? The Millennium Falcon, of course.



What's more exciting, skipping around on a Tauntaun and shooting AT-STs from a static gun emplacement or swooping over the entire battlefield in a Snowspeeder? To be fair, the level has a great ending that echoes *Rogue Leader* with some X-Wing-based blasting, but in trying to diversify *Rebel Strike*, Factor 5 have lost sight of what made the *Rogue Squadron* games so much fun, namely, blowing the baloney out of hundreds of enemies with a spaceship. It's good that Factor 5 have tried to do something new, but it's just not a step (ha!) in the right direction. Things reach a woeful nadir with the Dagobah-based Trials of a Jedi level, which is *entirely* on-foot and even sports some shockingly ill-judged platforming sections. Atrocious.

That's what's wrong with the game. Happily, the rest of it (even the one-dimensional Speeder Bike bits, which are exciting if played from the first-person view) is mostly wonderful. There are arguably fewer show-stopping centrepieces than in *Rogue Leader*, which boasted Vengeance on Kothlis and the Battle of Endor, but when *Rebel Strike* is on form the hair on the back of your neck will stand up. Take Deception at Destrilla; the ocean-planet assault half way through is a jaw-dropper. Or Relics of Geonosis, which cleverly interweaves Attack of the Clones into the story, its boring mid-level foot-slog redeemed by the discovery of Obi-Wan Kenobi's Jedi Starfighter and the ensuing asteroid field dogfight. Or Fondor Shipyard Assault, which culminates in a Trench Run-style swoop over the surface of a belief-beggaringly big Super Star Destroyer. Golden moments all, and if only those on-foot sections weren't so numerous, you'd forget about 'em altogether.

It ends on a whimper rather than a bang, though. Where the Battle of Endor was epic, the AT-ST stomp of Triumph of the Rebellion is an anticlimax (especially considering it culminates in Han Solo trundling around a bunker). The bonus levels, unlocked by getting medals for

"FOR EVERY THING IT DOES WELL, THERE IS A LITERALLY PEDESTRIAN EQUIVALENT"



MISSION CONTROL

Rebel Strike has a three-tiered structure. One path sees you playing as Wedge, the second as Luke, and the third involves some key moments from the films, such as the speeder bike chase from Return of the Jedi. Unfortunately, Luke's levels culminate in poor on-foot levels, but Wedge's path offers a great run of flight-based missions.

DID YOU KNOW? Geonosis is the sandy planet where the massive Jedi battle takes place in Attack of the Clones.

FORCES FOR COURSES

Light side or dark side? We take you through the game and see which side of the Force Rebel Strike lands on…



REVENGE OF THE EMPIRE

A killer opener, seeing you swoop over Yavin, but it's let down by the run-around-the-rebel-base finale. Yawn. +5 Force Points



DEFIANCE ON DANTOOINE

Luke's opening level is dreary. Hop on a speeder bike, run around shooting, get back on the bike… unsatisfying. -3 Force Points



DEFENCE OF RALLTIR

This is more like it – a siege scenario set on a gorgeous planet. Sports some classic AT-AT toppling action. +6 Force Points



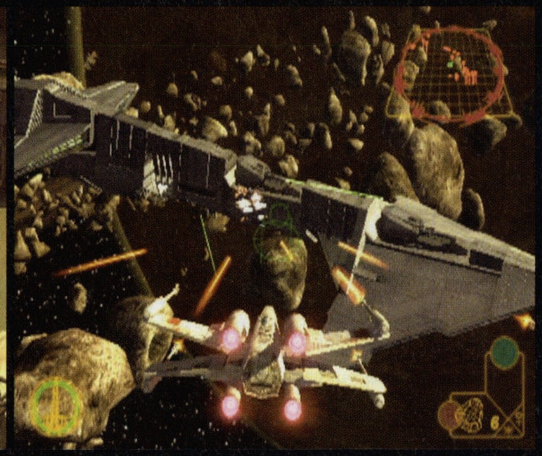
TRIALS OF A JEDI

This dreadful platforming action almost kills Rebel Strike. *Gaming at its most evil, this has no place on Gamecube. -12 Force Points*



THE SARLACC PIT

Jump from skiff to skiff to get to Jabba's ship, then kill the guards. Almost as bad as Trials of a Jedi. -10 Force points



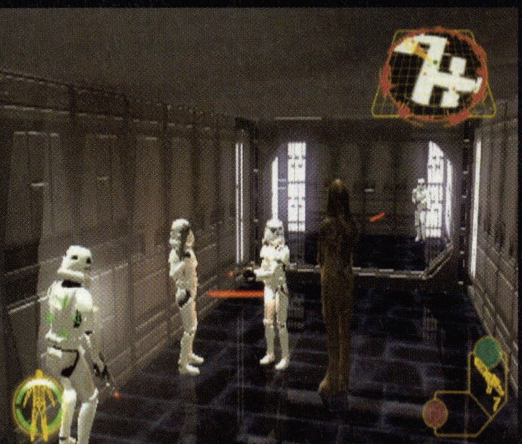
RELICS OF GEONOSIS

Wedge's missions offer the Rogue Squadron action we know and love. Dogfighting in an asteroid field – bliss. +7 Force Points



FONDOR SHIPYARD

Ace. Escort a rebel transport to an imperial shipyard, then attack an under-construction Super Star Destroyer. +7 Force Points



DEATH STAR RESCUE

Too much tedious prancing around. At least Escape From Hoth and Flight From Bespin end in spaceship action. -4 Force Points

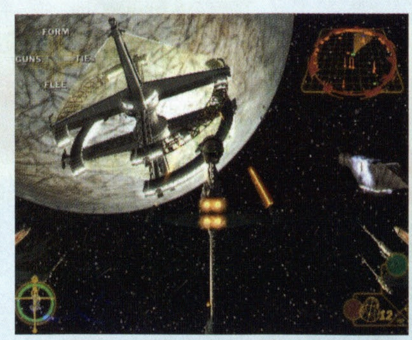


MULTIPLAYER

A wealth of options and the co-operative mode (featuring ALL of Rogue Leader*) is genius. Nice one, Factor 5… +8 Force Points*

VERDICT +4 FORCE POINTS

A victory for the Light Side, as the Force Points are in positive figures! But it was close. Think clean thoughts, that's the key. Or you could get rid of the poxy on-foot levels, eh?


Bakura offers some great dogfighting action.


Hoth is sadly a bit of a disappointment.



Bespin is tremendous in multiplayer. You can even go down into the trenches, if you're feeling suicidal.

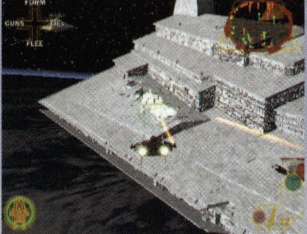
HOW TO SAVE ADMIRAL ACKBAR

Attack on the Executor is perhaps the finest of the secret levels.



THE LIVING END(OR)

Bongo! It's the Battle of Endor, which provided Rogue Leader's finest moment. This time you're in an A-Wing protecting Admiral Ackbar's command cruiser.



YOU'RE A STAR

See that Star Destroyer? You can't destroy it – you must strafe its flank and destroy the ion cannons that are peppering Ackbar's ship with neon laser death.



THREE'S THE CHARM

Done that? Great. But another two Star Destroyers are hoving into view. Disable their weapons too, and also kill many of the hundreds of TIEs flying around.



EXECUTE

Finally you attack Darth Vader's Super Star Destroyer, the Executor. You'll need to blast living hell out of the command tower but getting there isn't so easy.

being quick and accurate, are only sporadically entertaining, but the best of the bunch (Attack on the Executor) ushers in some much-needed epic space battle action.

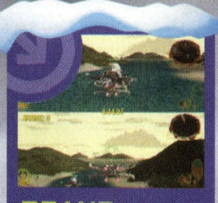
But while the single-player aspect of *Rebel Strike* is definitely a mixed bag, the sheer generosity Factor 5 show elsewhere makes up for it. Complete the game and you can open up the original arcade versions of *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back*, plus a DVD-style documentary and commentaries. But there's better to come – the multiplayer modes are really the icing on the cake.

The two-player deathmatch-style modes are super-smooth and great fun, offering everything from dogfights to all-out destruction with the 'Rampage' option, and even racing (through the Death Star trench). The real stroke of genius, however, is the co-operative mode. It is as fabulous as we'd hoped. The fact that it's the *entirety* of *Rogue Leader* continues to astonish us. Objectives are slightly changed and it's tougher than it was for the single-player, but working through the game with a friend is joyous. Two of you swooping between enormous Star Destroyers and Mon Calamari cruisers over Endor is an unimaginable treat.

Ultimately, despite these gifts, *Rebel Strike* is a disappointment. An often brilliant, air-punchingly enjoyable disappointment, admittedly, but a disappointment nonetheless. Away from the on-foot bits the rest of the game blooms like a particularly lovely flower, but there's no getting away from the fact that there's some rubbish in here. It's a shame that Factor 5 saw fit to include dross like The Sarlaac Pit when we could have had another level of the calibre of Defenders of Ralltir. As such, despite the welcome multiplayer options and flashes of invention and excellence, *Rebel Strike* is ultimately as frustrating as it is enjoyable.

JES BICKHAM

> "TWO OF YOU SWOOPING BETWEEN STAR DESTROYERS AND MON CALAMARI CRUISERS IS AN UNIMAGINABLE TREAT"



BRAND NEW TAG

One of the more entertaining multiplayer modes is 'Tag And Defend'. Each level – and there are some crackers, including Kothlis from Rogue Leader – contains a number of bases. Destroy a base and it becomes yours. However, if your opponent then frags that base, it becomes theirs. Lots of fun and there are some great levels to fight over.



- Looks incredible.
- Fab flying sections.
- Astonishing multiplayer options.



- Dreadful, *dreadful* on-foot bits.
- As lightweight as ever.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Rogue Leader
Activision
NGC/68 87%
The killer app at GC's launch – a frenetic arcade blast with looks to die for.





10 VISUALS
Has to be seen to be believed – intricately detailed and well lit.



10 SOUNDS
Incredible effects, surround sound and top voice acting.

9 MASTERY
Shunts hundreds of TIE Fighters around with nary a pause.

9 LIFESPAN
Bigger than its predecessor, with lots of multiplayer options.

VERDICT
Containing both entertaining brilliance and depressing mediocrity, *Rebel Strike* is an uneven but incredibly generous game.







△ Yes, please do. Go. Just go.



△ And we're about to start drooling.



△ Here we see a special beast thing doing its special magic attack. Honestly, this is spectacular stuff. You'll wonder why you ever cared about stuff like gameplay and good graphics.



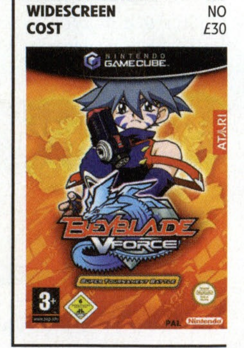
△ Final adjustments appear to make little difference to the outcome of a 'battle', but then does it really matter?



△ Yeah, the impact is really something – you can actually feel it through the controller! How on earth did they do that?

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	ATARI
DEVELOPER	TAKARA
RELEASE DATE	28TH NOV
PLAYERS	1-4
MEMORY CARD PAGES	7
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£30



BEYBLADE

SUPER TOURNAMENT BATTLE

It's true – videogames really do make you want to kill people…

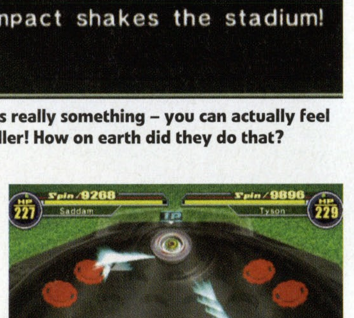
There's a long list of pastimes that even the most desperate videogame producers would be ill-advised to touch with a scat-encrusted bargepole. Tiddlywinks, for example, clearly wouldn't make a decent console game. Neither would knitting or loading the dishwasher after Sunday lunch. It's common sense. And as for fishing…

But when you've got a popular licence attached to the thing, you can make a game about anything you like, safe in the knowledge that enough mugs will be suckered into buying it to ensure there's a little something extra in your payslip at the end of the year. We say this because *Beyblade*'s last incarnation actually went straight to number two on the all-formats chart a few months back – particularly remarkable considering it was released for the all-but-dead PSone console.

And like the PSone version, this Gamecube *Beyblade* is unmitigated rubbish with this week's playground favourite name slapped on the front.

"IF YOU'RE DUMB ENOUGH TO BUY THIS, YOU SHOULD BE FORCED TO PLAY IT UNTIL YOUR BRAIN SHRIVELS TO THE SIZE OF A PEA"

It's about spinning tops. How thrilling is that? You press the button to launch your top into a bowl, then watch as it bashes into another top launched by your computer rival. Assuming you're not already frantically searching for the receipt so you can take the damn thing back to the shop, you might like to move the joystick to make your top move around a bit, thereby helping it bash into the other one some more.



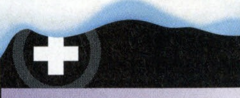
△ Losing…will…to…live…

The best bit comes when you get to fire off a special attack. This brings up an limp cut-scene where you get to watch a magical 'bit beast' rising from your top, making it bash into the other one even harder.

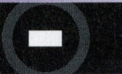
This tedious, repetetive waste of time continues until one of the tops gets bashed out of the bowl. Then you're declared the winner and you get to do it all over again, perhaps with a slightly different top (if you can be bothered).

It's *awful*. Spend the money on real Beyblade toys if you're that keen, but if you're foolish enough to buy the game you should have your eyelids sewn open, your thumbs glued to the pad, and be forced to play it until your brain shrivels to the size of a pea.

MARTIN KITTS



- If you're some sort of obsessive 'blade collector who doesn't like videogames…

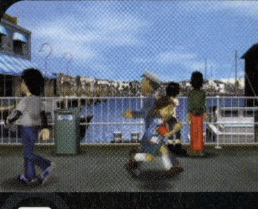


- It's rubbish.
- Really rubbish.
- Honest, it's crap.
- Thhwwwppp…



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Universal Studios
Kemco
NGC/67 24%
Terrible, pointless waste of time with a semi-decent licence name slapped on it.



2 VISUALS

A couple of spinning tops and some really lame backgrounds.

3 SOUNDS

Almost drowned out the sound of us yawning.



1 MASTERY

The only thing this game has mastered is total crapness.

2 LIFESPAN

Why bother playing a game with so little interaction?

VERDICT

Simply abysmal. There's no reason for this game to exist. Now watch it zoom straight to the top of the Gamecube charts. There is no justice.





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SIBERIAN STRIKE EPISODE II — CODE : 52823 — C

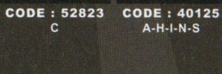
EARTH INVASION — CODE : 40125 — A-H-I-N-S



PLANET ZERO — CODE : 40244 — A-E-G-H-N-S

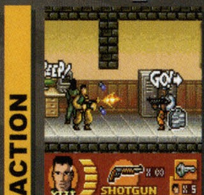


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SPORTS

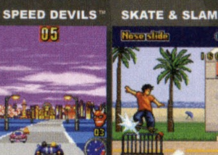
MARCEL DESAILLY PRO SOCCER



CODE : 87902
A-C-E-N

SPEED DEVILS™ — CODE : 61640 — A-C-E-H-I-N

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RAYMAN® BOWLING — CODE : 57727 — A-C-E-G-N-P



RAYMAN® GOLF — CODE : 45258 — A-C-E-G-H-I-N

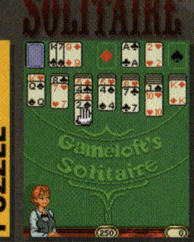


SUMMER VOLLEY — CODE : 87292 — A-H



PUZZLE

Gameloft's SOLITAIRE





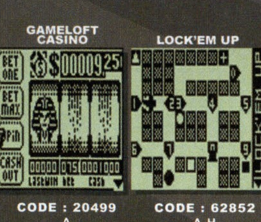
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△ You increase your style points for powersliding, having a near miss, driving a clean section, finding a shortcut… lots of ways, really. Just don't hit another vehicle or you'll lose out big time.

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND

Underground, overground, street racing free… With Hawk doing it too, subterranean is the new cel-shading.

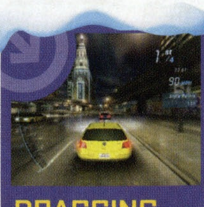
INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	EA BLACK BOX
RELEASE DATE	28TH NOV
PLAYERS	1-2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	9
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40

The sequel to last year's lazily ported *Hot Pursuit 2* – ironically in need of some speed itself – this does for racing games what *Def Jam Vendetta* did for wrestling. It's taking the source material back to the streets, giving racing some attitude and pummelling your senses with yoof culture. Sorry 'yoot cultcha'. This is an American game set on the illegal street racing circuit, you see – and it's all about the style and your reputation and the size of your exhaust. It knows who its audience is (20-somethings who drool through 2Fast2Furious) and it's pressing all the right buttons to please them. If you're not a fan of dim Southern boys dude-ing you up and throwing some *reeespect* at your hot new rims, you might want to look away now…

Underground builds on the ideas set out in *Hot Pursuit 2*, but swaps open country for inner city, and is an altogether different beast to *Burnout 2*. Where Criterion's blinding racer gives you the arcade ride of your life, sacrificing realism for face-rippling speed, bone-splintering crashes and full-fat arcade trimmings like its giant green corner indicators, *Underground* gives you the chance to mod up a real-world Ford Focus and take it drag racing and drifting and, essentially, lets you show it off around a city.

The idea's straightforward enough: nail the challenges set by a bunch of jive talkin', street racin' oiks in order to add



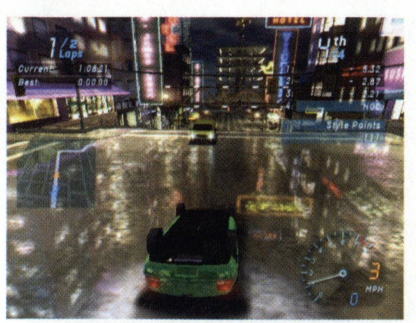
DRAGGING

EA have made drag racing about as entertaining as driving fast in a straight line can be. You have to attempt it with manual gears (an on-screen prompt tells you when to change gear) and avoid the oncoming traffic (a nudge left or right on the stick makes you change lanes). The screen (ie your head) wobbles when you're really tanking it…

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND

2Fast2Furious2Confusing?

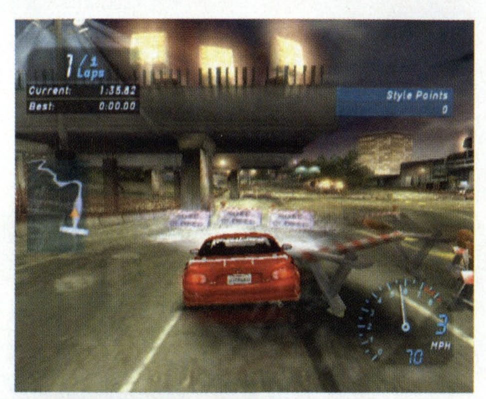
△ Hug the rear bumper of a rival for a Drafting bonus.



△ You often end up like an upturned turtle.



△ The on-screen HUD can be configured. Nice.



△ Feel the rumble as you crunch into stuff.



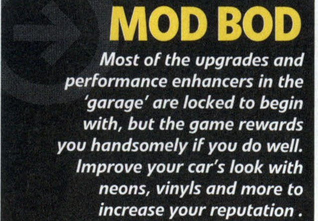
△ The rival drivers' AI is pretty keen – they don't follow a drone-like route through the race.



△ Drifting – hit the sides and your score tumbles.

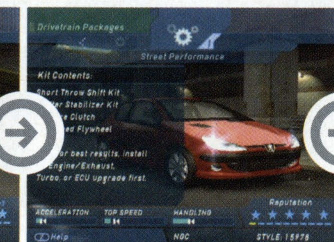
MOD BOD

Most of the upgrades and performance enhancers in the 'garage' are locked to begin with, but the game rewards you handsomely if you do well. Improve your car's look with neons, vinyls and more to increase your reputation.









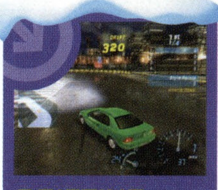


enough weight to your bank balance so you can beef up your motor. (There's a choice of 20 licensed cars, although naturally your choice is limited at the start of the game.)

Improving your ride's performance with turbos, better drive trains and faster tyres helps you win further races, as you'd expect. But by enhancing your car's look through application of vinyls, decals, neons, body styling and the like, you'll ultimately increase your reputation, which in turn adds a multiplier to the racing 'style' points handed out after each race, and eventually unlocks more car upgrades, cars and hidden tracks.

This is a driving game that takes you by the hand and coaxes you from start to finish, rather than just hurling a load of cars and courses at you at the start and leaving you to make your own way to the hidden vehicles. "The engine you're about to select…" says the girl who talks directly at you in key cut-scenes during the main Going Underground mode, and who's currently guiding you through the car upgrades process, "…will make you go a bit faster." (Or words to that effect.)

> **"IF YOU'RE NOT A FAN OF DIM SOUTHERN BOYS DUDE-ING YOU UP, PLEASE LOOK AWAY NOW…"**



DRIFTING

The pure powersliding (or 'drifting' as it's called in the seedy world of Underground) races aren't as exciting as they first appear. You don't race against anyone directly, you just skid about the place by yourself and get your score compared to the others at the end. Don't hit the sides – that's all you need to know, really…

"You haven't bought all of all the performance upgrades you can afford – go back and get them," warns the computer as you're about to enter a race which you don't currently have a chance of winning. Wahoo! Later you get told that your car's on the cover of an Italian modding magazine. Dude!

RACE OF SPADES

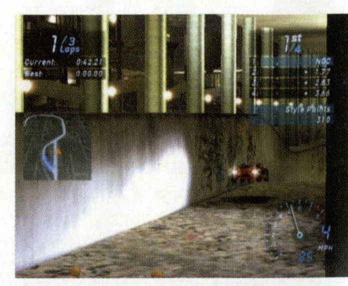
To reach the point where you can upgrade, though, you need to enter races. You're alerted to these via your map screen. You'll have to endure lap-by-lap knockout races, take part in drag racing down reasonably busy city streets, head off-road for a bit of drifting and burn cross-town in a race from A to B. The rewards you earn in the main Underground mode can also be used in the Quick Race mode – extra

DID YOU KNOW? *Need for Speed Underground* is also coming to Game Boy Advance. Apparently it'll have graphics that 'obliterate the envelope'.

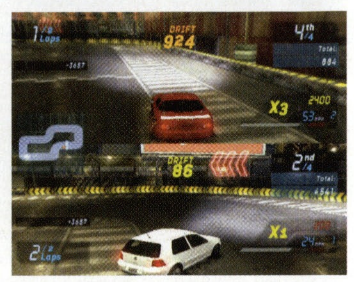
"A typically solidly put together EA title, with all the licensed cars you can eat"



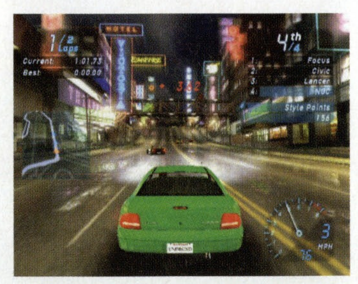
▲ This is what happens if you don't swap lanes in time to avoid an oncoming van during a drag race.



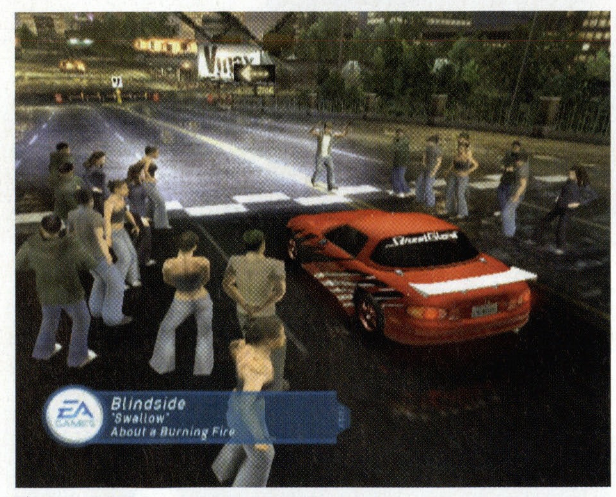
▲ With enough speed and a decent jump, the camera'll cut away.



▲ Two players can go head-to-head in the drifting stages. Look at the Golf. Fool.



▲ There are just three viewpoints to choose from – Far, Close and Bumper.



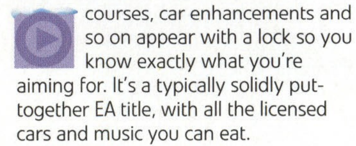
▲ Before each race, a bunch of oily street types swing their arms, shouting and jeering. Eat our exhaust pipe, fools!



▲ Despite being in the lead, player one's just muffed it. Player two should take advantage, but it is Geraint driving…



▲ Just look at those reflections! It's like driving on highly polished marble.



courses, car enhancements and so on appear with a lock so you know exactly what you're aiming for. It's a typically solidly put-together EA title, with all the licensed cars and music you can eat.

The game even gives you a taste of a powerful motor, complete with screen-smearing turbo, right at the very start, before you have to go back and pick a basic car and start from scratch. It's a nice touch that entices you to keep playing – the sense of satisfaction generated from kitting out your basic shell with top-of-the-range gear is impressive. Even if we haven't heard of some of the brands…

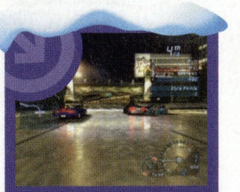
But for everything it gives you with one hand, it slips its other into your back pocket and takes it away.

As we pointed out in our preview last issue, it can be difficult to see where you're going. Terrible idea for a driving game, that. The races take place at night. At times it's wet. At times you're pelting along a dirt track with clouds of dust guffed into your windscreen from the car in front.

At times you're in the lead, bombing along an unmade road without decent street lighting and – is that some car headlights up ahead? *Screeech* – BANG – *Voom-voom-voom* (your three rivals pass you…) No. No, it wasn't. I swerved to avoid nothing. *Nothing*. Gah.

To get the sensation of speed and 'being there', you've got no option but to stick with the 'bumper cam' view. And this really does prove problematic at times. EA could conceivably argue that to find the best driving lines and shortcuts, street racers have to drive their illegal circuits until they know them like the back of their oil-stained hands. We just think they could have made things a little more user-friendly.

It's obvious that EA are concerned about this, as they've highlighted the major shortcuts on the on-screen map. In fact, sometimes it feels like you'd benefit from just steering your tiny arrow around the map rather than trying to negotiate the incredibly detailed cityscapes.



POINT RACE

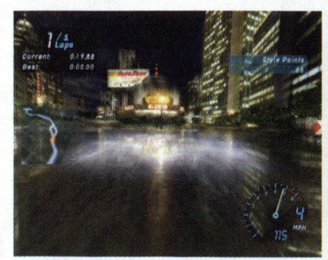
The most infuriating course-based challenges are those that involve you racing along a predetermined route, rather than multiple laps of a circuit. Clip a tree towards the end of the course and you just watch yourself come to an ugly halt while the chasing pack skim over the finishing line. Infuriating.

VISUAL SUSPECTS

The cities really are detailed. They're influenced by real locations, but not set in them, and they're superbly realised. Actually, they're a bit too well realised at times – the streets are so wet and shiny it's like driving on a mirror. The car modelling's also decent, although some of the traffic you encounter, such as the delivery trucks, isn't quite as polished as we'd like.

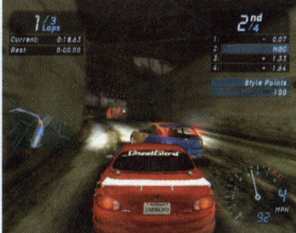
MAN, YOU'VE GOT THE SKILLZ...

Underground goes over the top in some areas...



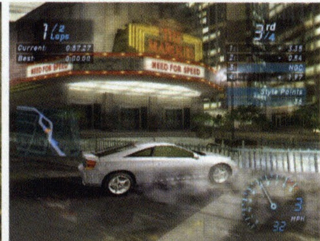
I FEEL THE NEED...

The speed element of Underground is pretty much there, once you get past the early selection of cars. Real men always race with Bumper cam view...



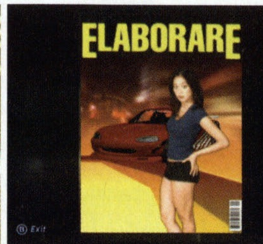
BRAAAAINS...

The computer-controlled drivers are tough cookies, jostling you at the start. You can turn the catch up element on or off. Real men leave it on...



SMALL STUFF...

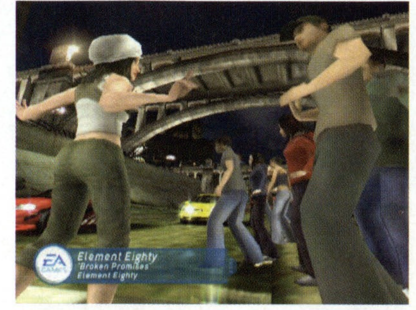
Look at the detail – look at it. The only time you really get to look at it all is when you make a driving error. Real men don't make errors...





COVER STAR...

The ultimate accolade – ending up on the cover of a magazine. You'll need to really build up your reputation to unlock the set. Real men like magurzeeeen...



▲ **The character modelling's not great at times. Just check the smudged face on this fella.**



▲ **See what we mean about it being hard to see at times? Don't get stuck at the back...**

▲ **The lighting's pretty good, really. The headlights are very effective (especially when you're close to the road in Bumper Cam view). You can even upgrade these with customised lamps later in the game.**

Unfortunately, due to the licensing of real-world vehicles, there's no car damage in the game. You can pummel into the cross-town traffic at 100mph and, even though you get a cutaway showing your car spinning, flipping and crashing down on its paper-thin roof, there's nothing to indicate how bad an impact it was. It just ends up looking like a toy. Unfortunately, there's no way around this – if one manufacturer refuses to let their car take damage in a game, then it ends up affecting the rest. Which is a shame. Mmm.



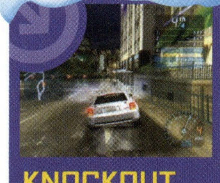
"THE CITIES ARE A BIT TOO WELL REALISED AT TIMES – THE STREETS ARE SO SHINY IT'S LIKE DRIVING ON A MIRROR"

What we do take issue with is the frame rate. There are key moments when the game just looks jerky. This even happens in the occasional cut-scene. When a girl who's about to start the race twitches across the screen like a Czechoslovakian string puppet, it does spoil the magic somewhat.

Thankfully, powersliding your car around the city streets can be satisfying. EA Black Box want you to savour the scream of the tyres, and the generously wide corners give you plenty of space to enjoy yourself in (and rack up the 'drifting' style points). It's also dead fast at times (especially when you can afford the turbo upgrades) and it's certainly entertaining for the most part. *Burnout 2's* more consistently exciting, though. *Underground's* drag racing and drifting are nice asides (well, drag racing's not too bad, at least), but it's the circuit racing – and more specifically the knockout races – which get your adrenaline pumping here.

With a bit more care and attention to the driving experience, and more focus on making the Gamecube version as good as the others, this could have been superb. As it stands it's entertaining, but not truly essential. Still, we're sure EA will be listening, and bringing in some changes for next year's version...

MIMTENDO



KNOCKOUT

This is entertaining. It's a last-man standing (er, driving a car) challenge. Four racers (you and three rivals) race a circuit with the last place runner being knocked out each lap. Your heart frequently ends up in your throat as you try desperately to Not Be Last. The AI of the other cars is pretty solid as well – it really turns out some of Underground's tensest moments...

+

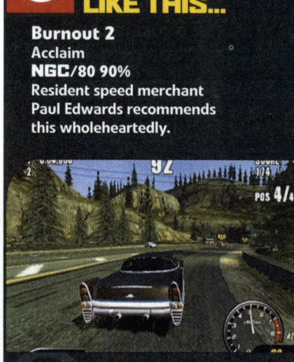
- Fast.
- Detailed circuits.
- Real-world cars.
- 111 'races'.

–

- Detail hampers clear driving.
- Weak crashes.
- Jerky in places.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Burnout 2
Acclaim
NGC/80 90%
Resident speed merchant Paul Edwards recommends this wholeheartedly.



7 VISUALS

Captures the sensation of speed well, but the jerky glitches annoy.

8 SOUNDS

THX certified, like the latest *Medal of Honor*. Licensed 'toons' too.

7 MASTERY

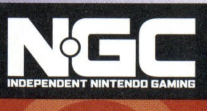
Tries to push the machine – pulls it off most of the time.

8 LIFESPAN

Lots of races, plenty of stuff to unlock, decent amount of cars.

VERDICT

It feels like it's trying to do too much at times, leaving itself open to accusations of style over substance. It still manages to entertain, though...



77

DID YOU KNOW? EA say 'you are what you drive' in *Underground*. Good job we rarely play Donkey Kong in *Mario Kart* then...

"Reams of expensive footwear"

PLAYER SELECT

One interesting addition to Live 2004 is the ability to swap between players on your team, even if they don't have the ball, letting you find receiving space yourself rather than relying on the CPU.

INSTANT REPLAY

There's a neat replay feature now that allows you to halt the action and fiddle around with what's gone, zooming in and taking a closer look. Smart.

TOP GEAR

Get on in Dynasty mode and you clock up Dynasty Points. The more points you nab, the more you can spend in the all-new NBA Nike store. Go nuts, go on…

FACE OFF

NBA Live 2004 is something of a revelation technically, with fluid, super-quick play and amazing likenesses. Animation-wise, things have been improved massively.

+

- Dynasty mode.
- Tighter control.
- More moves.
- Shopping option.

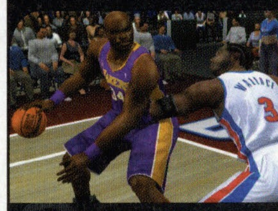


–

- Occasional glitches in terms of animation and slowdown.
- A little 'cold'.



NBA 2K3
Sega Sports
NGC/79 85%
Big name endorsements, trendy music and – more importantly – ace b-ball.



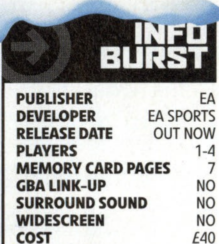
8 VISUALS
Incredible detail on the players plus some really slick animation.

8 SOUNDS
Excellent commentary and swelling stadium sound effects. Neat.

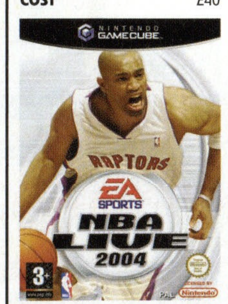
8 MASTERY
Smooth and free-flowing, with slick and impressive AI.

9 LIFESPAN
With Dynasty mode, this game becomes essentially endless.

INFO BURST



PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	EA SPORTS
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-4
MEMORY CARD PAGES	7
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40



NBA LIVE 2004

Ultra-slick b-ball without any real personality. Still, who wants a talker when you've got a player?

As with every EA sports title since the dawn of time, this begins as it means to go on: slick presentation, licensed music and player endorsement. But, you don't have to dig too far beneath the surface to discover plenty of substance to go with the style.

As well as the continued refinement of the Dynasty mode, which allows you to build up a team from scratch, there's been a raft of improvements on the actual court itself. Overall control is markedly better, with the most basic functions assigned to different buttons. Whereas dunking grew from the same button as laying up in the last version, this time round you've got a greater degree of control – if you want to hold back from a dunk, you just don't press the dunk button. Offensive options are better as well, with a bigger variety of passes and lay-ups, plus some more interesting tricks. Defensively, it's also a good deal easier to protect the hoop.

Additionally, there's some excellent AI work been put in on the game's off-the-ball elements. You can now change between players at will even if they haven't got the ball, allowing you to make zig-zags across the court in order to free up space for other members of your team. Admittedly, the idea sounds odd in theory, but in practice it works.

Dynasty mode is where you'll spend most of your time, though, delving into the drafts, trading players, working on tactics and earning Dynasty points. The better you do in competition, the more points you earn – and that's when you can go shopping. In another big-name endorsement, EA have teamed up with Nike so that you have access to reams and reams of expensive footwear – including those legendary Air Jordans.

> **"OFFENSIVE OPTIONS ARE MUCH BETTER, WITH A BIGGER VARIETY OF PASSES AND LAY-UPS, PLUS SOME INTERESTING TRICKS"**

If there's one criticism of *NBA Live 2004*, it's that it feels strangely soulless, despite the stadium sounds, 'modern' music and excellent commentary. As unfair as this sounds, you can't help but feel it's got something to do with how slick – and thus clinical – everything is.

Still, a top-notch game all the same.

TIM WEAVER



△ **The big moves are much easier to access now, thanks to tighter controls.**

VERDICT

Almost too clean for its own good, *NBA Live 2004* is nevertheless a huge and immensely impressive basketball game that easily sees off other, lesser efforts.



86

DID YOU KNOW? In the 'mature' 1995 movie, *The Basketball Diaries*, watch out for the bit where Leo DiCaprio is talking to his 'mum' in the 'kitchen'. You can clearly see the shadow of a boom mike on the wall. Whoops.



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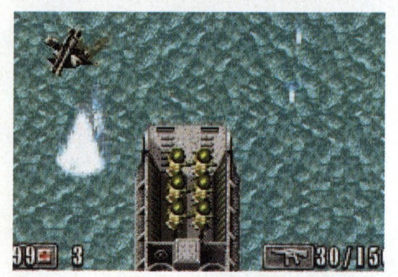
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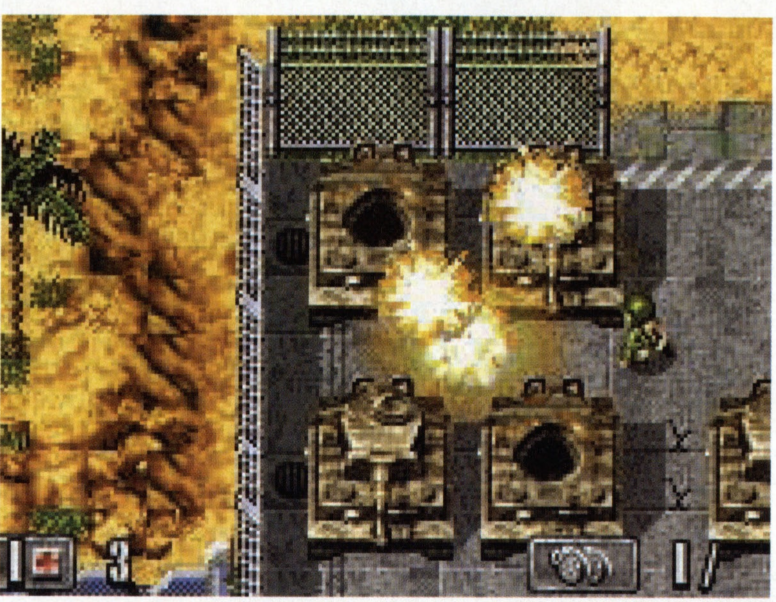
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Δ Sniper sections provide a pleasantly mindless break from the main action.


Δ Like the GC version, cut-scenes abound. But they're not good.


Δ You're always outnumbered in *MoH Infiltrator* and, er, always outgunned. Using grenades and such, then running away is very advisable then.


Δ Oh joy, body-seeking bullets.


Δ The Nazis aren't respecting the red cross, then. How evil...



MEDAL OF HONOR INFILTRATOR

The latest GBA installment of the MOH series blows away those unpleasant memories of Underground.



Most quality shooters on the GBA have also been fairly brainless. We've had the FPS carnage of *Doom*, the variations on *Metal Slug* that are the *Counter Terrorism* series... And that's, well... pretty much it.

Medal of Honor does something different; it does the strategic blaster. For that alone it deserves to be up here at the front of GBA Reviews.

Unlike its home console cousins, *MoH Infiltrator* takes a top-down view of the action and the game unfolds pretty much screen by screen. It's you versus a veritable army of Nazis, Vichy French, their collaborators, their tanks, their guns and their planes.

To put it bluntly, you don't stand a chance in hell unless you take radical action.

This means finding cover and picking the enemy off one by one, before turning their very own hardware on them and upgrading your puny pop guns to rocket-launching weapons of mass destruction. EA have bee ambitious in their objectives, we'll give 'em that.

Infiltrator delivers you to the barren sands of Morocco, but as you push inland, the terrain becomes more complex. You'll be charged with storming fortresses and ransacking barracks, while all the time the number of foes steadily increases. The scope of the objectives increases too, although in all honesty you never really have to do anything other then find smart ways to kill your opponents.

The genius of the game is that you can never take anything for granted. You're always on edge. Completing missions feels less like carefree blasting and more like solving explosive riddles. Indeed, if anything, *MoH* is too challenging – particularly for those new to gaming – and the relief that the *Silent Scope*-style sections provide is palpable. Equally, while the visuals are 'utilitarian', this doesn't dampen the atmosphere – a feeling nicely supplemented by WW newsreels and some beautifully scene-setting, non-playable battle sequences.

> **"YOU'RE ALWAYS ON EDGE. COMPLETING MISSIONS FEELS LIKE SOLVING EXPLOSIVE RIDDLES"**

All-in-all, *Infiltrator's* a quality package. Unquestionably the best shooter of the year, it does for the GBA what *Cannon Fodder* did for the GBC.

SCOTT ANTHONY



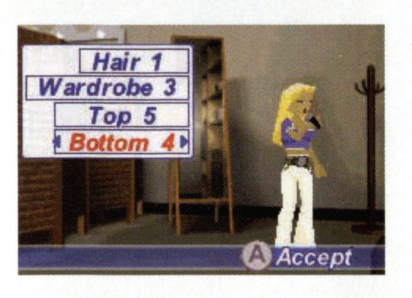
INFO BURST

FROM	EA
PLAYERS	1-2
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	NO
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW
COST	£35

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING
89



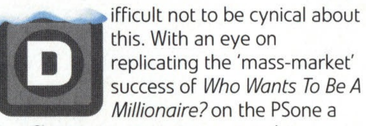
△ **Not only have the game's three judges had a nice makeover, they only appear to have three catchphrases. How annoying is that? Answer: hugely.**





POP IDOL

The Rick Waller of GBA games. Perhaps not even that good…



Difficult not to be cynical about this. With an eye on replicating the 'mass-market' success of *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* on the PSone a few Christmases ago, it appears that Codemasters have welded together a dumbed down Bemani game – if that doesn't sound ridiculous – and a big shiny licence. The end result's as dignified as a gropey uncle dancing with your girlfriend.

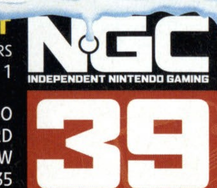
A bit like *The Sims, Pop Idol* starts with you throwing together your pop wannabe. How you look for each performance is supposed to affect what the judges say. But we're not sure how. Especially as the judges' patter is pretty limited. This would be fine if the centre stage of the game was any good. But it isn't.

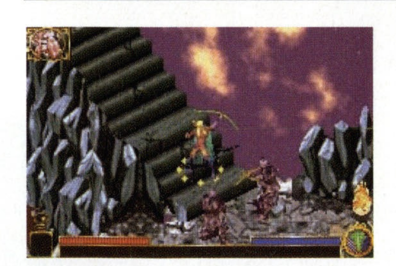
In time-honoured Bemani tradition, you press A or B to a not very wide variety of music, in this case Robbie, Christina, Boyzone and more. But whereas the best of this genre are bright, humorous, frantic and unpredictable, *Pop Idol*'s dull palette and tinny sounds produce an effect about as glamorous as a burger flipper in Barnsley singing Britney.

The game's as easy as that hapless hamburger server too. At least until you get to the grand final, when it becomes all-but impossible. The only saving grace is the way your charge begins to sing out of key when you fall out of time.

While splicing together a few squeaky clean faces with some old Doors songs might cut it in the pop world, it's plain that Codies' *Pop Idol* isn't even close to discovering the gaming equivalent to Simon Fullers' money-making formula. **SA**







LORD OF THE RINGS
THE RETURN OF THE KING

The GBA version of *ROTK* plays pretty much identically to the GC version. However, shorn of the home console's cinematic visuals, the simple 'walk right, press B' hackery quickly becomes as tedious as a one-player game of *Gauntlet*. Several playable characters is fine but something decent to play through would be better. What saves *ROTK* from being lord of outright , is the RPG-like add-ons – using the ring to win low-level baddies over to your side, for instance. It's professionally put together, but a missed opportunity. **SA**





FIFA 2004

Football games on the GBA are a sorry bunch. *FIFA 2004* is the best to date, but far too easy. The use-this-move-to-score-every-time nature of matches makes the single-player championship yours every time. Much better value is the link-up mode, where the Keegan-esque, 'you score 5, I'll score 7' ethos makes for compelling competitions. Otherwise, *FIFA 2004* is slick and comprehensive: the GBA's solid pro. **SA**





CRASH
NITRO KART

By hitting the GC and GBA simultaneously for maximum inter-connectivity madness, Crash gets the early drop on Mario's karting effort. In every other respect, Nintendo's ageing GBA racer blows *CNK* away.

It's not a case of, 'if you're bored of *MK* then maybe you should give this a shot', either, as so many of *CNK*'s tracks spookily echo Mazza's effort. The power-ups are just like *Mario Kart*'s but not as good, and the powersliding boost – supposedly the game's unique feature – is in *Super Circuit* too. It's also a smaller game and slower too. **SA**





PREMIER
MANAGER 2003/4

Zoo's *Premier Manager* is the first footie management game to hit the GBA and we're betting that it's also going to be the definitive one.

So much anorak love has gone into *PM*. The players that you expect to get sent off, like 'Boro's Mills, do. The players that stay loyal to their clubs, like Bolton's Djorkaeff, do. And all the while Darren Anderton is getting injured…

Problems? Well, while impressively up to date, the game's player database is small – after a few seasons we noticed identical players called D Sturridge floating about. Trainee Mottys will still love it, though. **SA**



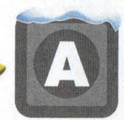
TOP GEAR RALLY

The best GBA game to come out of Australia? You bet your bottom dollar. It might only have a few racing modes, but once TG Rally gets hold of you, it's hard to pull away…





△ **Unusually for a rally game, you have to compete against other cars as well as the clock. The scenery's nicely detailed as well, as you can see. Yes, well done developers Tantalus…**



As good as *V-Rally 3* and *Colin McRae 2* are, it's difficult to shake the feeling that they take rallying more seriously than 99% of GBA owners are inclined to. Part of the genius of Kemco/Nintendo's *Top Gear Rally* is that it's enjoyable to play from the off and its all round cleverness doesn't become apparent until you're well and truly hooked.

Although it's a rally game, all you need to do to progress is finish in the top three of each stage. Simple, no? Indeed, the initial courses are wide and the obstacles restricted to a few advertising boards, but as you move to the city stages, the courses get narrower, the bands sharper and the obstacles more numerous.

Soon you'll feel the need to abandon the inflexible automatic gearbox and head for the garage. By the closing stages of the game, if your car isn't tailored to the conditions, you may as well be competing against Richard Burns in a supermarket trolley.

The progression from arcadey racer to all-out rally championship is brilliantly done. And unlike the option-stuffed rally games of yore, *TG Rally* offers plenty of courses, modes and motor-tuning options. Witnessing the technical brilliance of the game's later stages is almost reward enough in itself. *TG Rally* is also unusual in that its two-player frolics are as instantly rewarding as a quick blast with a long-time rival on *Mario Kart*. That's quite some achievement for a rally game.

The best-looking into-the-screen racer on GBA so far, *TG Rally* is to GBA racing games what AC/DC are to rock. Believe.

SCOTT ANTHONY





YU-GI-OH DUNGEON DICE

Yu-Gi-Oh Dungeon Dice has a good premise. It works like a trading card duel, but with dice. The number of monster crests, magic, attack and trap faces that turn up on the three dies you roll per turn, dictate the way you lay a path across a chess-like board. The aim: to release your creatures on to the board and capture your opponent's Die Master.

The duelling can be deep to the point of impenetrability, but it lacks variety; it's just duel after duel after duel. At best, this is the turn-based game to buy after you've played *Advance Wars 2*, *Onimusha* and *FF Tactics*. **SA**





HARRY POTTER QUIDDITCH WORLD CUP

Quidditch is so complicated, you wonder how it fit into a videogame at all. The meat of *HPQWC* is best described as ice-hockey on broomsticks, with some *Road Rash*-type thuggery thrown in. When the fabled snitch gets released, however,, action switches to an *Afterburner*-style affair. Sound complicated? It is. The game's odd point system even makes the World Cup into a league, but you don't have to be a Harry fan to enjoy the frantic action. Good stuff. **SA**





TIGER WOODS 2004

By boldly making the 'power bar' extinct, the *Tiger Woods* series has pushed videogame golf up the virtual order of merit. Rock the D-pad back and forth to swing your club. As well as crippling your hands, this brings the human error factor (so fundamental to golf), nicely into play. Taking tutorials with Tiger will also teach you how to fade, draw, cut, punch and spin. But ironically, the game bottles true greatness. Although the subtleties are tricky to master, the essentials (like hitting the ball straight) are easy. More challenge next time, please. **SA**





PRINCE OF PERSIA

Prince of Persia has two wheezes that lift it above the average platformer. Firstly, the game gives you the ability to rewind time for a few seconds – enabling you to avoid would-be lethal blows. Secondly, by collecting scrolls our Prince can learn extra acrobatic rolls and jumps.

PoP is hardly platforming aristocracy but a pleasant enough adventure all the same. There's plenty of 'hit-this-switch-and-double-back' gaming to be done, and while we'd be lying if we said it was edge-of-the-seat stuff, in its own quiet way, it provides enough entertainment to wile away a few hours with. **SA**





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ADVANCE WARS 2 FULLY MAPPED SOLUTION! Battle your way through the GBA's best game!
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THE ULTIMATE REV-VIEW!
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IT'S HERE!
FINAL FANTASY
THE BIGGEST REVIEWS!
TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND
ONIMUSHA TACTICS ADVANCE
LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
FINAL FANTASY TACTICS
MEDAL OF HONOR
THE SIMS
BOKTAI
FIRST REVIEW!
SPYRO ADVENTURE
Is it hot or grot?
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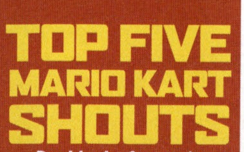
Over the next few pages, you'll see a selection of Top Fives games hand-picked by us which we recommend anyone new to Nintendo Gamecube gets involved with. Now we want yours. They can be any regular category of game, or something a little different (your five favourite multiplayer games, five games with brilliant endings etc). Send us your Top Five list and earn yourself a priceless (or, more likely, worthless) prize!

NGC ESSENTIAL

THE BEST 'CUBE GAMES MONEY CAN BUY...

TOP FIVE MARIO KART SHOUTS

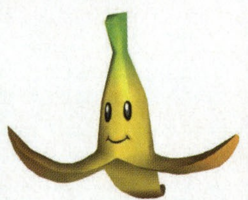
Double the fun, twice as much opportunity to hurl limp abuse at your friend as you unleash a power-up.



"EAT THAT. AND THAT. AND *THAT*."



"OH, DO 'AVE A BANANA..."



"I HATE YOU ALL."



"CHOMP'S AWAY!"



"WHO FANCIES A NICE BIT O' BLUEY..?"









1 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA THE WIND WAKER — 97

NINTENDO ■ NGC/79

The babbling nonsense of the internet whingers faded to a stunned silence when "Nu Celda" finally hit the shelves. It's an interactive experience that's as exquisitely fashioned as a Disney feature film, and doesn't lose any of the gameplay for it. Some interminable sailing sections spoil it a bit, and it's pretty short, but this is as close as 'art' as 'games' have been yet.

NGC STAR GAME

2 METROID PRIME — 97



NINTENDO ■ NGC/79

A polished, addictive, stunningly immersive adventure-cum-shooter-cum-platformer that will make you cry when it's over. Pushes the envelope in every field. Classic.

NGC STAR GAME

3 SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE — 96



NINTENDO ■ NGC/73

Mazza's cleaning up oily muck on a tropical island put there by an evil villain. With all the intuitiveness, polished visuals and sense of pure fun of *Mario 64*, this pushes all the right buttons.

NGC STAR GAME

4 F-ZERO GX — 93



NINTENDO ■ NGC/85

Speed, challenge and stunningly designed tracks blended to form the finest of arcade racing experiences. And it really is fast. You won't put up with slowdown again.

NGC STAR GAME

5 SOUL CALIBUR 2 — 92

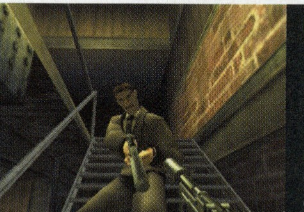


NINTENDO ■ NGC/86

The best fighting game on *any* system. It's one of the best-looking games you'll have ever seen and offers rich depths to those who go looking. And you can go nuts with Link.

NGC STAR GAME

6 TIMESPLITTERS 2 — 92



EIDOS ■ NGC/72

A stonker of a time-travelling FPS with more than a whiff of *GoldenEye*, *Timesplitters 2* crept out of nowhere to officially become Gamecube's finest example of the genre. Wick!

NGC STAR GAME

7 SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE — 91



NINTENDO ■ NGC/68

Eye-singeing multiplayer, ingenious moves, cameos from about every Nintendo character ever, and some of the sweetest looks yet squeezed from the Cube.

NGC STAR GAME



8 WAVE RACE BLUE STORM — 91



NINTENDO ■ NGC/67

Slight frame-rate problems in PAL, but *Blue Storm* is still a fabulous racer, replete with *the* most incredible water effects ever. Fast, dynamic, accessible and sublime to control.

NGC STAR GAME

9 HITMAN 2 SILENT ASSASSIN — 91

EIDOS ■ NGC/82

Tighten the fibre-wire and leave your morals at the door as Mr 47 brings his potent elimination simulation, freshly polished-up, to the 'Cube. This is stealthy, free-form gaming at its finest.



10 VIEWTIFUL JOE — 90

CAPCOM ■ NGC/80

Side-scrolling 2D beat-'em-up, in which Capcom want to make you feel you're editing a movie while playing a game. It works. Distinctive looks are the icing on the cake, too.

11 WORMS 3D — 90



SEGA ■ NGC/87

Essentially turn-based strategy, but loopier than a tin of spaghetti hoops. The annelids enter 3D – all you need for stupid amounts of fun are three homicidal pals.



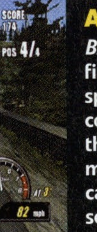
12 BURNOUT 2



90

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/80

B2 takes the best bits of the first game – bum-clenching speed and bone-crunching collisions – and welds them onto more modes than you can eat. A brilliant series refinement.





13 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE



90



ATARI ■ NGC/78

Essentially *Gauntlet* with lots of numbers and menu screens, online *PSO* becomes an epic tale of crate-smashing, internet companionship, and fevered item collection. Blork!



14 SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS



90



ATARI ■ NGC/81

Vast boat-based RPG ported from the Dreamcast. "It'll take away a chunk of your life and you won't want it back", says a man versed in such things. It's very good, apparently.

15 CONFLICT DESERT STORM 2 — 90

SCI ■ NGC/86

War? Like Georgie-boy Bush, we just can't get enough of it. You're not allowed to let any of your men die in this sequel, which leads to all sorts of life-saving heroic gameplay.

16 SSX 3 — 89



EA ■ NGC/87

Improves over its already-excellent predecessor in every area. A range of modes, ludicrous tricks and the mountain to end all videogame mountains will keep you busy all the way through the winter.

17 RESIDENT EVIL — 89

CAPCOM ■ NGC/72

The classic zombie-horror fear-fest recreated to take advantage of the Cube's superior electrical witchcraft. Stunning, mesmerising visuals, unrivalled atmosphere and a brilliant storyline. Controls are still crap, though.

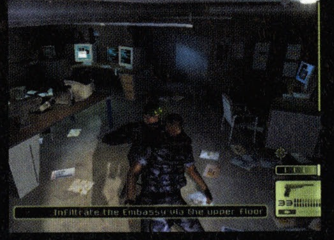
18 ETERNAL DARKNESS — 89



NINTENDO ■ NGC/74

A rollicking Lovecraftian yarn of ancient evils, *Eternal Darkness* replaces slick zombie-slaying action with a wonderfully creepy story told through a cast of 12 playable characters and a truly innovative magic system.

19 SPLINTER CELL — 89



UBI SOFT ■ NGC/81

Starring Sam Fisher, a man with three green glowing eyeballs and powerful thigh muscles. Clanciverse stealth-fest with a gritty 'realistic' feel and the opportunity to operate various Clancy-approved hi-tech gizmos.



20 LUIGI'S MANSION — 88



NINTENDO ■ NGC/67

With Mazza incarcerated in a haunted house by you-know-who, brother Luigi ushered in the year of the Cube in with this fantastically playable combination of *Super Mario World* and *Ghostbusters*. It's a little bit short, but still ace.

TOP TEN GBA GAMES



1 ADVANCE WARS 2
More cute-looking turn-based strategy, with a frighteningly addictive, super-challenging core. Honestly, it's better than it sounds. This is essentially *Advance Wars 1.5*, but it's tweaked to perfection.

2 METROID FUSION
Everything that has ever made *Metroid* great can be found here. A sprawling environment littered with baddies and an imposing difficulty level. It has a great link-up feature with *Prime* too.

3 SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2
This slightly tweaked version of the SNES classic boasts a massive game world and some of the tightest level designs ever. Stone-cold classic.

4 FINAL FANTASY TACTICS ADVANCE
A superbly executed strategy game. The sheer volume of items, character classes and jobs available is staggering.

5 YOSHI'S ISLAND
Stunning level design, fiendish puzzles and secrets all topped off with some beautiful pastel-shaded visuals. Another essential 2D platformer for GBA.

6 POKÉMON RUBY & SAPPHIRE
The same structure as before – catch 'em all, send 'em in to battle – but it remains the most entertaining RPG out there…

7 SUPER MARIO KART ADVANCE
Much like the superb SNES original: burn around multi-coloured tracks dishing out justice with weapons.

8 STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3
An incredible conversion of one of the best fighters ever. Massive single-player and a brilliant two-player experience.

9 CASTLEVANIA HARMONY OF DISSONANCE
More accessible than its previous GBA outing, this is classic *'Vania*. Imaginative bosses, a steep challenge and very atmospheric.

10 GRADIUS ADVANCE
The best shooter on GBA, and it's doubtful many will ever get close. Classic *Gradius* gameplay, with innovative levels and fantastic bosses.



NGC DIRECTORY

Your at-a-glance guide to everything else on GC...

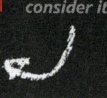
HOW IT ALL WORKS

Title, score, publisher and where to find the review.

A brief outline of what to expect and whether you should consider it...

I WISH IT COULD BE CHRIS MOYLES EVERY DAY  **06**

NOBSOFT ■ NGC/0.3

Seasonal radio sim. Help Radio 1's portly disc jockey save the station by pressing the same old A button over and over again... 

18 WHEELER PRO AMERICAN TRUCKER — **48**

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/68

Drive your truck and avoid 'smokey'. Like *Out Run* with 'rigs', but the arcade version with the sit-in cabinet was better.

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP — **30**

EA ■ NGC/69

As much fun as being told your parents have been crushed to death in a horrific car crash and then contracting Weil's Disease.

ACE GOLF — **74**

EIDOS ■ NGC/74

A highly enjoyable, relaxing sticksie-ball game that treads a pleasant middle-ground between fun and serious.

AGGRESSIVE INLINE — **81**

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/72

Hawk's alterno-clone – you skate around massive arenas, 'busting' tricks on a pair of 'roller-boots'.

ATV QUAD POWER RACING 2 — **70**

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/77

Wave Race on land with farming utility vehicles. Competent, but there's superior racing fare out there.

BALDUR'S GATE DARK ALLIANCE — **80**

VIVENDI ■ NGC/81

Dungeon-slashing adventurising with fewer numbers and a special two-player flavour. Actually quite good.

BARBARIAN — **70**

VIRGIN ■ NGC/72

A button-mashing fantasy battler complete with fully-smashable arenas. Fun, but not as good as *Smash Bros.*

BATMAN: DARK TOMORROW — **15**

KEMCO ■ NGC/81

Bats stars in Gamecube's most arse-clenchingly bad title to date. Clunky, dull, gameplay-free superheroics.

BATMAN VENGEANCE — **70**

UBI SOFT ■ NGC/67

Cel-shaded platforming cartoon bat-action. One of the first Cube games that came out but it's looking pretty ropy already.

BEACH SPIKERS — **79**

ATARI ■ NGC/72

Volleyball on sand. Addictive with four players, but the single-player's longevity lets the side down.

BIG AIR FREESTYLE — **28**

ATARI ■ NGC/75

Another awful off-road bike title, the kind that makes you want to cry the second you've started playing.

BIG MUTHA TRUCKERS — **71**

EMPIRE ■ NGC/83

A cross between *Elite* and Smokey and The Bandit, but with The Reynolds replaced by wall-eyed hillbillies.

BILLY HATCHER & THE GIANT EGG — **86**

SEGA ■ NGC/87

Rescue the Chicken Elders by rolling an egg around and smacking bad guys with it. Hatch it while you can!

BIONICLE — **29**

EA ■ NGC/87

Diabionicle, more like. Tedious and fiddly with a duff camera and no incentive to keep playing. Stick to bricks, Lego.

BLOOD OMEN 2 LEGACY OF KAIN — **72**

EIDOS ■ NGC/77

Gamecube's other undead hack-fest. After 1,000 years of slumber, evil vampire Kain is awake and hungry.

BLOOD RAYNE — **65**

VIVENDI ■ NGC/79

Vampire fun. Dismember Nazis, fire an array of period weaponry, and battle an *evil priest* driving an *armoured pulpit*.

BLOODY ROAR: PRIMAL FURY — **74**

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/68

Competent morphing-into-animals fighting shenanigans, but *Capcom vs SNK* and *Mortal Kombat* have surpassed it.

BMX XXX — **48**

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/76

Childish, boring BMX game featuring pneumatically-enhanced strippers showing you their nipples. Get a girlfriend instead.

BOMBERMAN GENERATIONS — **70**

VIVENDI ■ NGC/76

Yet another update of the venerable arson franchise. Single-player is a little tedious; four-player is addictive as ever.

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER CHAOS BLEEDS — **70**

VIVENDI ■ NGC/86

Somehow lacking in essential Buffiness, and not just because the Gellar girl didn't voice it. Good, but not great.

BURNOUT — **86**

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67

With spectacular crashes and inch-perfect handling, *Burnout* is a dream of a game, even if it's over a bit quickly.

CAPCOM VS SNK 2 EO — **79**

CAPCOM ■ NGC/72

A great game, but purist retro freaks will want to fork out for a clunky arcade stick to get the most from it...

CASTLEWEEN — **16**

WANADOO ■ NGC/81

Unfairly difficult dismal platforming tedium with some kind of cartoony black magic schtick going on.

CEL DAMAGE — **60**

EA ■ NGC/66

Cel-shaded car-combat game in the vein of violent cartoons. Too manic and confusing for its own good.

CONFLICT DESERT STORM — **89**

SCI ■ NGC/80

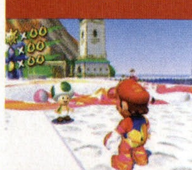
Tense and teeth-gritting, with a great co-op mode. Brain-based fun for those nuclear winter evenings.

CRASH BANDICOOT THE WRATH OF CORTEX — **40**

VIVENDI ■ NGC/75

One of the worst ports we've seen – of a game that was a stinking load of crap to begin with! Avoid like death himself.

TOP FIVE PLATFORM GAMES



SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
A tour-de-force of everything good gaming should be.

LUIGI'S MANSION
Yes, it's a little easy to polish off, but you'll enjoy every second.

RAYMAN 3 HOODLUM HAVOC
Can't touch *Sunshine*, but it's entertaining and looks 'the bomb'.

WARIO WORLD
Not that tough to beat, admittedly, but still bags of fun.

SONIC MEGA COLLECTION
The best hedgehog games in existence on one tiny disc.

TOP FIVE RACING GAMES




F-ZERO GX
Expertly crafted arcade fun. Really rockets along.

WAVE RACE BLUE STORM
Classic Nintendo action with dazzling water effects.

BURNOUT 2
Fast car racing combined with steel-crunching crashes.

EXTREME G 3
The weapons are what make this future racer shine.

DAKAR 2
Proof that driving virtually alone in the desert can be fun.

CRAZY TAXI — **70**

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67

Ancient title that's so old it's now been included as one of the minigames in *GTAIII*. Creaky graphics, but still good fun.

DAKAR 2 — **79**

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/80

Driving around in a vast expanse of dirt, all on your own, for days on end? *Dakar 2* manages to make this pretty good fun.

DARK SUMMIT — **51**

THQ ■ NGC/69

SSX Tricky but with all the speed, style and entertainment removed with near-surgical precision. A waste of time.

DAVE MIRRA 2 FREESTYLE BMX — **75**

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67

Pornography-free, good, moto-cross game. Slick with big arenas – but will only appeal to the BMX hardcore.

DIE HARD VENDETTA — **80**

VIVENDI ■ NGC/74

Shoot holes in people who look like terrorists, so the US can enjoy one more night of guiltless slumber.

DEAD TO RIGHTS — **60**

EA ■ NGC/83

What if Max Payne had an attack dog? Mindless ultraviolence. JACK SLATE is PISSED OFF and wants to HURT SOMEONE!

DEFENDER — **50**

MIDWAY ■ NGC/79

Pointless 3D update that makes one of the hardest-core arcade classics really easy and, by extension, depressingly dull.

DEF JAM VENDETTA — **87**

MAJESCO ■ NGC/82

Wrestling thumpfest featuring all your favourite hip-hop artistes from 'the block'. Bone-crunching moves and 'sick' beats.

DISNEY'S EXTREME SKATE ADVENTURE — **74**

DISNEY ■ NGC/85

Neither extreme nor adventurous. Fine for people not up to *Tony Hawk's*, like your little brother or nan.

DISNEY'S MAGICAL MIRROR — **26**

DISNEY ■ NGC/73

Cruel torture as The Mouse patronises his way through this hideous 'adventure'. Almost Beckettian in its non-eventfulness.

DISNEY SPORTS BASKETBALL — **55**

KONAMI ■ NGC/82

Strip away the franchised exterior and it's another simple Sports title. Soon to follow: *Disney Sports Russian Roulette.*

DISNEY SPORTS FOOTBALL — **69**

KONAMI ■ NGC/76

This isn't anywhere near as bad as you may think. It's an amusing, simple footie game for younger gamers.

DISNEY'S PARTY — **56**

EA ■ NGC/86

Mickey and chums come up with a mildly entertaining party game – but would you pay £30 to be mildly entertained?

DISNEY SPORTS SKATEBOARDING — **64**

KONAMI ■ NGC/80

The Mouse and his irritating friends have a crack at busting tricks on half-pipes. Walt must be spinning in his cryogenic pod.

DONALD DUCK GOIN' QUACKERS — **32**

UBI SOFT ■ NGC/68

Like *Crash Bandicoot*, but with The Duck in charge, wearing a sailor suit and going bthackakackth. Also total rubbish.

DOSHIN THE GIANT — 62
NINTENDO ■ NGC/74
Quirky title that puts you in charge of a giant yellow man who must help/hinder indigenous islanders. A little short-lived.

DRAGON BALL Z: BUDOKAI — 43
ATARI ■ NGC/87
Dated fighter where the characters move as though their feet have been dipped in concrete. Avoid even if you're a fan.

DRIVEN — 60
BAM ■ NGC/68
Very basic, very short game of the appaling film about driving fast in a large circle. Filling up bargain bins as we speak.

DR MUTO — 70
MIDWAY ■ NGC/79
Amusing mad-doctor platforming game where you have to mutate into different animals to solve puzzles.

DROME RACERS — 46
EA ■ NGC/85
Brings absolutely nothing new to racing, and doesn't manage to do the old stuff with any flair either.

EGGO MANIA — 49
KEMCO ■ NGC/72
Rubbish take on *Tetris* that, mystifyingly, involves ovulations. Wouldn't look out of place on an Amiga. Pointless in every way.

ENTER THE MATRIX — 73
ATARI ■ NGC/81
Take the red pill and find out how vaguely disappointing this movie tie-in is. We were expecting something really special.

ESPN INTERNATIONAL WINTER SPORTS 2002 — 37
KONAMI ■ NGC/67
Winter sports game combining tiresome button-mashing antics with equally dull timing and precision exercises. Dull.

EVOLUTION SKATEBOARDING — 78
KONAMI ■ NGC/79
Snazzy-looking *Hawk's* clone, but then, who wants an Elvis impersonator if the King's in town?

EVOLUTION SNOWDARDING — 23
KONAMI ■ NGC/79
Fight bad guys while sliding down a mountain on a tray. Worse even than *Dark Summit*. Games like this should be made illegal.

EXTREME G3 — 85
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67
An underrated gem, *XG 3* offers pulse-shattering speed, huge tracks, some ingenious weaponry and eye-sparkling visuals.

F1 2002 — 67
EA ■ NGC/71
Rock-hard racing your dad will enjoy. Also features humourless Hun driving robot Schumacher version 1.0.

F1 CAREER CHALLENGE — 81
EA ■ NGC/83
Packed representation of the glamorous world of F1 team management. You can take the cars for a spin too.

FIFA 2003 — 83
EA ■ NGC/75
EA finally remember how good football games are made. Actually a bit better than *ISS 2*. A vast improvement.

FIFA FOOTBALL 2004 — 85
EA ■ NGC/87
It wasn't broken, but EA have fixed it anyway, slinging in more stats, new animations and a great Career mode.

TOP FIVE FIGHTING GAMES



SOUL CALIBUR 2
Gorgeous Link-fuelled beat-'em-up from fight kings Namco.

SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE
All your favourite Ninty types pounding each other's faces in.

VIEWTIFUL JOE
The only one-player beat-'em-up in our top five. Stunning.

DEF JAM VENDETTA
The wrestling game that appeals to non-grapple fans as well.

MK DEADLY ALLIANCE
"Mind if I remove your spleen?" "Ooh, go on – finish me."

TOP FIVE SHOOTING GAMES



METROID PRIME
Tough as nails shooting-heavy sci-fi adventure.

TIME-SPLITTERS 2
Pure class first-person shooting from the *GoldenEye* boys.

STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER
Looks great and lacks the ropey on-foot sections of the sequel.

IKARUGA
A pure arcade shooter that's tougher than most.

DIE HARD VENDETTA
Dirtymouth John McLane shoots *everyone*. Not bad.

FINDING NEMO — 65
THQ ■ NGC/86
Horrible loading times and stuttering graphics spoil what could have been enjoyable for rugrat gamers.

FREEDOM FIGHTERS — 83
IO ■ NGC/86
Blast invading Russian commies intent on taking over the US. Realistic? Not on your nelski. Fun? Oh da.

FIREBLADE — 59
MIDWAY ■ NGC/77
Brain-free 'copter game that'll appeal to military memorabilia-collecting psychos and fans of 80s Vietnam war films.

FROGGER BEYOND — 59
KONAMI ■ NGC/80
The trend for 'improving' ancient games by making them 3D taken to its most extreme conclusion.

GAUNTLET: DARK LEGACY — 25
MIDWAY ■ NGC/68
We'd be far more comfortable with this travesty if we'd had it inserted rectally. An insult to the memory of an arcade classic.

GODZILLA: DESTROY ALL MONSTERS MELEE — 68
ATARI ■ NGC/74
Stompy, building-smashing monster fun in multiplayer mode, but otherwise a little weak. Get *Smash Bros* instead.

HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS — 78
EA ■ NGC/75
Attractive and competent adaptation of Potter's film – but rather easy. Only die-hard wizard fans need apply.

HOT WHEELS VELOCITY X — 45
THQ ■ NGC/75
Basic racing/car-combat game based on plastic toys. Strictly for the very, very young. Or very stupid.

HULK — 65
VIVENDI ■ NGC/82
Get angry, turn green, and SMASH your way through puny soldiers. Also stealth sections with boring Bruce Banner.

IKARUGA — 85
ATARI ■ NGC/80
Classically old-style shooter – originally designed for robots, now available for human consumption. Very, very, *very* hard.

ISS 2 — 83
KONAMI ■ NGC/68
A winning formula mystifyingly tarnished with unnecessary 'improvements'. Good – but also a step backwards.

ISS 3 — 78
KONAMI ■ NGC/82
The once-invincible football series sinks ever lower with a misguided new 'close-up' mode.

THE ITALIAN JOB: LA HEIST — 54
EIDOS ■ NGC/85
So short, even total games goobers can finish it. The lack of variety doesn't help. A mini driving game in every respect.

JAMES BOND 007 AGENT UNDER FIRE — 70
EA ■ NGC/70
Workaday gameplay dressed up in off-the-peg shooter upholstery, shooting baddies with ping-pong balls.

JAMES BOND 007: NIGHTFIRE — 72
EA ■ NGC/75
The best Bond game on Gamecube so far – done with flair – but the visuals can't hide an FPS that's lacking overall.

JEDI KNIGHT II — 67
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/75
A seriously disappointing PC conversion of an overrated shooter. Huge game, but quite tedious.

JEREMY MCGRATH SUPERCROSS WORLD — 20
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/69
Like a horrible nightmare about doing cross-country wearing nothing but steel-wool pants and barbed-wire flip-flops.

JIMMY NEUTRON BOY GENIUS — 18
THQ ■ NGC/78
Tedious, sorry, devoid-of-inspiration 'puzzle' game that actually manages to out-borify *Universal Studios*.

KELLY SLATER'S PRO SURFER — 75
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/73
Same old trick-based extreme-sports, but this time in tubes made of water. Quite good fun, for a while.

KNOCKOUT KINGS 2003 — 79
EA ■ NGC/75
If the arcadey nature of *Rocky* doesn't sit that well with you, give this face-smashing simulator a go instead.

LEGENDS OF WRESTLING — 47
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/69
Bringing back old-skool 'rasslers' isn't enough to make this any good. A shambolic licensing cash-cow.

LEGENDS OF WRESTLING II — 50
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/76
Yet another travesty of a wrestling game, but made marginally better by the addition of Big Daddy.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS THE RETURN OF THE KING — 86
EA ■ NGC/87
More playable characters, including Gandalf, and less button-mashing permitted make an epic, very enjoyable sequel.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS THE TWO TOWERS — 68
EA ■ NGC/78
Repetitive hacking game with RPG overtones. Guide your man through levels making goblin prosciutto and orc sausages.

LOST KINGDOMS — 86
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/70
Collect, er, cards, and battle monsters with them in fantasy landscapes. The sequel does it better, though.

LOST KINGDOMS 2 — 87
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/81
Set 200 years after the events of the first game. It's a more satisfying experience, but it's still on the frothy side.

MADDEN NFL 2004 — 87
EA ■ NGC/85
Great stuff – a satisfying and accessible version of the sport for both newbies and experienced Yankee Egg Chasers.

MARIO PARTY 4 — 68
NINTENDO ■ NGC/75
Disappointing. Not bad if you're in the mood for party fun, but it's done little to improve on the originals.

MAT HOFFMAN'S PRO BMX 2 — 70
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/75
A decent extreme sports sim. A bit slicker than *Dave Mirra*, but with smaller, tighter arenas. Does the job.

MEDAL OF HONOR FRONTLINE — 74
EA ■ NGC/75
FPS set during World War II. Looks ropy in places, but it's atmospheric and highly enjoyable.



DIRECTORY

Every Gamecube game ever… rated!

MEGA MAN NETWORK TRANSMISSION — 59
CAPCOM ■ NGC/84
Here's an idea: take a great GBA game, strip the good bits out and put the resulting platformer on GC. Yeah, that's *brilliant*.

MEN IN BLACK II ALIEN ESCAPE — 45
ATARI ■ NGC/78
Rubbish off-the-peg third-person shooting game of the rubbish off-the-peg movie sequel. Did we mention it was rubbish?

MICRO MACHINES — 57
ATARI ■ NGC/78
Like the recipe for bread or wine gums, *Micro Machines* doesn't change much, and this iteration is no exception.

MINORITY REPORT — 39
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/77
Astonishingly brutal third-rate ass-whupping game that takes place on the sets of a Spielberg movie.

MORTAL KOMBAT DEADLY ALLIANCE — 80
MIDWAY ■ NGC/77
The best *Kombat* yet! The blood-soaked spine-ripping yarn finally gets the update it deserves on Gamecube. Finish him!

MX SUPERFLY — 63
THQ ■ NGC/73
Handles like you're driving space bikes on the surface of the moon. The best of a very bad bunch, though.

MYSTIC HEROES — 71
THQ ■ NGC/75
Simplistic 3D *Gauntlet*-style slasher that's somehow entertaining and charming. Well, Geraint thinks so.

NBA 2K3 — 85
ATARI ■ NGC/79
Puts all other basketball games to shame. Great gameplay complements an engrossing Career mode.

NBA COURTSIDE 2002 — 79
NINTENDO ■ NGC/68
The second-best basketball sim available, but it's still lacking. Strictly for hardcore fans of the Ball of B.

NBA LIVE 2003 — 70
EA ■ NGC/75
The yearly EA update. Solid gameplay; lots and lots of lovely numbers; otherwise not much different from last year.

NBA STREET VOL 2 — 88
EA ■ NGC/85
Almost negates the need for realistic sports sims – and all for half the price of real basketball trainers.

NEED FOR SPEED 2 HOT PURSUIT — 69
EA ■ NGC/74
Ironically slow racer. A lazy port has ruined what was originally a pretty entertaining franchise.

NFL 2K3 — 86
ATARI ■ NGC/79
A meaty gridiron sim that could even threaten *Madden*. Management bits don't detract from the gameplay.

NHL 2003 — 64
EA ■ NGC/75
A realistic approach to ice hockey which isn't particularly fast or – more importantly – fun.

NHL 2004 — 57
EA ■ NGC/85
Behind-the-scenes additions don't compensate for the terrible frame rate on the ice. Play it at your peril.

NHL 2K3 — 72
ATARI ■ NGC/80
Complicated ice hockey title with stodgy gameplay. Similar to *NFL 2K3*, but doesn't quite pull it off.

NHL HITZ 20-02 — 79
MIDWAY ■ NGC/67
Exaggerated ice hockey title in a similar vein to *Red Card*, where the sticks aren't just for hitting the puck.

NHL HITZ 20-03 — 65
MIDWAY ■ NGC/74
Another year, another dose of frantic ice action. Not much cop on the original, mind.

PAC MAN WORLD 2 — 70
EA ■ NGC/78
The Pac is back for hilarious retro-themed platforming fun. Shamelessly pilfers everything from *Mario 64*.

PIKMIN — 86
NINTENDO ■ NGC/80
Created using textures from Shigsy's own garden. A wonderful real-time strategy with multicoloured vegetable men.

P.N.03 — 77
CAPCOM ■ NGC/84
This super-stylish shooter with its dancing heroine is only marred by dull bosses and design.

PRO RALLY 2002 — 58
UBI SOFT ■ NGC/74
An okay game completely and ruthlessly dragged down by its thoroughly awful, frustrating handling.

PRO TENNIS WTA TOUR — 48
KONAMI ■ NGC/74
The only tennis game on 'Cube so far, but with rubbish non-analogue controls and distinctly whiffy visuals.

RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP — 74
SCI ■ NGC/78
Solid, does all the things a rallying game should. Should do the job until *McCrae* sees the light of day.

RAYMAN 3: HOODLUM HAVOC — 84
UBI SOFT ■ NGC/78
The limbless French Freak™ has the last laugh with a game that, insists our correspondent, is actually good.

RED CARD 20-03 — 78
MIDWAY ■ NGC/71
Violent football game where you mince opponents with stud and fist until the meat shows.

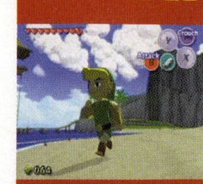
REIGN OF FIRE — 59
BAM ■ NGC/76
A poor game of a poor film, even if you do get to burn stuff. Nice ideas ruined by dodgy physics and controls.

RED FACTION — 66
THQ ■ NGC/82
Shoot capitalist scum in the face, and maybe blow some holes in walls too, in this distinctly average brown fighting game.

RESIDENT EVIL ZERO — 85
CAPCOM ■ NGC/78
Ditches the solo formula for a two-character system. Great set-pieces, looks lovely… more *Resi*, basically.

RESIDENT EVIL 2 — 62
CAPCOM ■ NGC/81
Experience the shambling, undead terror of original PSone graphics! Revisit Leon and Claire for just… £30!

TOP FIVE ADVENTURE/ RPGS



ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER
Phenomenal. A reason to own Gamecube itself.

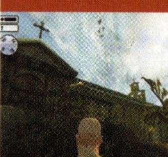
METROID PRIME
Tough as nails shooting-heavy sci-fi adventure. Again.

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE
A number-cruncher that turns epic with a bit of t'internet.

SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS
If 'classic' RPGs are your bag, this boy'll be a sackful of joy.

LOST KINGDOMS II
Polished RPG with card collecting elements. Neat.

TOP FIVE ACTION ADVENTURES



HITMAN 2
Compelling assassin sim that kills the competition dead.

RESIDENT EVIL
A superior zombie-cruncher with slightly niggly controls.

ETERNAL DARKNESS
Another Nintendo exclusive that never fails to entertain.

SPLINTER CELL
Captivating stealth-laced adventure from the hand of Clancy.

RESIDENT EVIL 0
Not as good as those titles up there, but it's still dead good fun.

RESIDENT EVIL: NEMESIS — 65
CAPCOM ■ NGC/81
Braaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii nnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnssssssssssssssssssssssssss! Etcetera.

ROBOTECH BATTLECRY — 77
TDK ■ NGC/77
Stompy robots go to war in the game of the loony Japanese cartoon. Not bad, as far as stompy robot games go.

ROCKY — 78
RAGE ■ NGC/74
A solid fighter where you guide Rockies one to five to greatness. Top two-player, loads of unlockable extras.

SCOOBY DOO NIGHT OF 100 FRIGHTS! — 36
THQ ■ NGC/74
Platforming non-action that'll hold your interest for half an hour or until you need to go to the loo; whichever comes first.

THE SCORPION KING — 30
VIVENDI ■ NGC/75
Bad. Very bad. Guide a poor approximation of The Rock and hit bad guys over and over until they bleed from the eyeholes.

SEGA SOCCER SLAM — 67
ATARI ■ NGC/74
A cartoonish footie game with an interest in violence. Cracking in multiplayer – poor on your own.

THE SIMPSONS: HIT & RUN — 80
VIVENDI ■ NGC/87
The Simpsons take a tip from *GTA* and start driving recklessly and doling out the violence. And what's more, it works!

THE SIMPSONS: ROAD RAGE — 52
EA ■ NGC/68
A really quite bad *Crazy Taxi* rip-off, with Simpsons characters bolted on, spewing repetitive 'funny' one-liners.

THE SIMS — 81
EA ■ NGC/79
Highly addictive people simulating comes to the Cube. A great sense of humour and lots of potential for mischief.

SMUGGLER'S RUN WARZONES — 78
ROCKSTAR ■ NGC/73
Huge landscapes and fast-paced 'racing' in buggies is let down by repetitive gameplay and awful music.

SONIC ADVENTURE 2 BATTLE — 70
ATARI ■ NGC/67
Sega's annoying mascot on Gamecube, now with an extra dimension added. Does anyone care any more?

SONIC ADVENTURE DX DIRECTOR'S CUT — 38
ATARI ■ NGC/83
A GBA link-up feature for GC, but otherwise a straight port of a game that was rubbish to begin with.

SPEED KINGS — 57
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/83
Wannabe *Burnout* with, strangely, lots of sliding under lorries involved. Otherwise bland and unnecessary.

SONIC MEGA COLLECTION — 70
ATARI ■ NGC/79
If you have a retro craving, you could do worse: seven games on one disc, accurate down to the loading times!

SPIDER-MAN THE MOVIE — 72
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/69
Dodgy control and camera are the only problems with this platform adventure. Voiced by the original cast.

SPY HUNTER — 55
MIDWAY ■ NGC/68
Appaling frame-rate, nasty course design and linear racing make this one to avoid. A pointless remake.

SPYRO: ENTER THE DRAGONFLY — 40
VIVENDI ■ NGC/75
Much like *Crash Bandicoot*, this is another shoddy port of a game that was never much fun in the first place.

SPYRO: ENTER THE DRAGONFLY — 68
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/77
The panting, pot-bellied, totally rubbish space-assassin gets the *Tomb Raider* treatment in this distinctly average game.

SSX TRICKY — 87
EA ■ NGC/69
Has PS2 written all over it, but is still excellent. Fast courses, shortcuts and secrets and mid-piste scrappage equal FUN.

STAR WARS THE CLONE WARS — 71
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/75
Enjoyable *Battlezone*-style tank blaster set around Episode II – not quite as good as *Rogue Leader*, but still fun all the same.

STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER — 87
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/68
The most memorable – and certainly the best-looking – Star Wars game yet. The Battle of Hoth will melt your eyes.

STARFOX ADVENTURES — 72
NINTENDO ■ NGC/74
Adventure that's way too easy and linear. Not awful, but should have been far better. Hardly a fitting send-off for Rare.

THE SUM OF ALL FEARS — 25
UBI SOFT ■ NGC/76
One of the most technically inept games we've played. Clancy says bury the copies in the desert before anyone notices.

SUMMONER A GODDESS REBORN — 68
THQ ■ NGC/79
Much levelling-up and numbers floating out of people's heads. Crappy visuals, but an engrossing adventure.

SUPER BUBBLE POP — 65
JALECO ■ NGC/78
Kind of *Tetris*-y flavoured *Bust-a-Move* for the Sunny Delight generation, with chemically-induced visuals and music. Wick.

SUPERMAN: SHADOW OF APOKOLIPS — 60
ATARI ■ NGC/81
Supes redeems himself somewhat with this stylised and, most importantly, maze-free effort based on the animated cartoons.

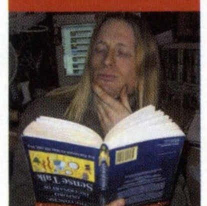
SUPER MONKEY BALL — 88
ATARI ■ NGC/67
Ingenious simian-flavoured update of Marble Madness. One of the weirdest, most wonderful Gamecube games out there.

SUPER MONKEY BALL 2 — 82
ATARI ■ NGC/78
The apes are back with levels even harder of core, and a mental new story mode involving love, betrayal and banana-theft.

SX SUPERSTAR — 71
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/83
Unassuming motocross scrambling, enhanced with a *Def Jam*-style Career mode than involves girlfriend upgrades.

TARZAN FREERIDE — 59
UBI SOFT ■ NGC/67
Disney. Platformer. Need we say any more? Workaday, jungle-based gameplay with the Seventh Earl of Greystoke.

PAUL'S SENSE TALK



GUITAR GODS
Logically, it had to happen with guitars. I mean, imagine Slash playing the solo to 'Sweet child 'o' mine' on the trumpet?

PROSTHETICS
We'd all be better off if we had pigs arms. In the case of an accidental amputation, doctors would have far less to think about due to trotters having no moving parts like fingers do.

OLD SAYING
You know they say, "You can't have your cake and eat it"? Well you can, just buy two, and eat one.

CAMERON DIAZ?
...you know I could show Cameron Diaz a better time than that Timberlake bloke ever could. Frome's got the only cinema in England that serves beer, and I could also show her the actual hill that Jack and Jill went up – how much better can you get than that? Eh, love? *Eh?*

GIGGING
Right, anybody looking? No... good 'cos this is a bit shameless really. My band, Kortez, is playing on 26th or 27th Nov (we don't know yet) at The Louisiana in Bristol which is on Bathurst Terrace, Wapping Rd – be there... please! See the details on www.thelouisiana.net

Do you have more 'sense' than our Sense Master Paul Edwards? Probably! He wants your Sense Talks, mate! Send them to him at paul.edwards@futurenet.co.uk or to Sense Talk at the usual address.

TAZ WANTED — 52
ATARI ■ NGC/72
Some of the worst level design we've ever seen in this middling, frustrating cel-shaded *Mario*-wannabe platformer.

TETRIS WORLDS — 38
THQ ■ NGC/73
THQ ruin one of the Best Games Ever by trying to make it 'better'. Will anyone stop these people before it's too late?

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2003 — 82
EA ■ NGC/75
The world most efficient golf robot gets his own game. Actually really good, in a surprisingly arcadey way. Nice graphics, too.

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004 — 84
EA ■ NGC/86
Ginormous plus humungous multiplied by golf. Apart from that and a few tweaks for stattoes, it's the same as the last one.

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON — 66
UBI SOFT ■ NGC/79
Clancy has yet another go at squad-based tactical ops, and this time things run a little bit more smoothly. Entertaining stuff.

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3 — 87
ACTIVISION NGC/67
Mental grinds and stunts backed up by a mountain of extras and vast skate parks – if you haven't tried *Hawk's*, do it now.

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4 — 85
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/75
No time limits and some great RPG elements and minigames complement the larger areas in *TH4* – a well-tweaked fourquel.

TOP ANGLER — 35
XICAT ■ NGC/81
Generic fishing game, predictably involving bass, that doesn't even get the basics of its limited genre right. Tiresome.

TOP GUN: COMBAT ZONES — 71
VIRGIN ■ NGC/72
Wingman-being movie-based flyboy antics. GC's only flight 'sim' – pretty challenging, but we recommend you try it first.

TUROK EVOLUTION — 71
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/73
Relatively disappointing dino-hunting FPS sequel. Not as bad as *Turok 3* on N64, but serious niggles let the series down badly.

TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER — 60
EA ■ NGC/76
An average platformer with an Antipodean twist. It's a solid example of the genre but nothing more or less.

UFC THROWDOWN — 51
UBI SOFT ■ NGC/73
Highly amusing freestyle thump-fest, where you lead your oily, grunting man to victory in some Greek-style athletic contest.

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS — 24
KEMCO ■ NGC/67
Anyone who makes a game that has you picking up rubbish should be shot, stuffed into a suitcase and hurled into the sea.

V-RALLY 3 — 68
ATARI ■ NGC/82
Speedy rallying game that wouldn't be so much of a drag if they'd concentrated on the basics first. Like, er, the steering.

VIRTUA STRIKER 3 V2002 — 55
ATARI ■ NGC/69
Nice to look at, horrible to play. Rubbish AI and unwieldy controls make for a crap game of footie.

WALLACE & GROMIT IN PROJECT ZOO — 70
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/87
Recreates the plasticene duo's flexible world brilliantly. Only a few fiddly sections let this youngsters' platformer down.

WARIO WORLD — 86
NINTENDO ■ NGC/83
The purple-nosed anti-Mario gets his own game. A funtastic, surreal frenzy of lowbrow humour and monster-hitting. Waah!

WORMS BLAST — 63
UBI SOFT ■ NGC/74
Annelids go to war (again). Kinda like *Bust-a-Move* in a puzzly-action kind of way, except this isn't anywhere near as good.

WRECKLESS THE YAKUZA MISSIONS — 51
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/75
Drive around like a lunatic and smash up cars and anything else that gets in your way. Sub-*Burnout* road-accident nonsense.

WWE CRUSH HOUR — 43
THQ ■ NGC/83
Those magnificent greasy men drive magnificent greasy fighting machines for some unlikely *Vigilante 8*-style 'thrills'.

WWE WRESTLEMANIA X8 — 70
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/72
Okay wrestler, but with nothing particularly new and a way-too-familiar engine. Still, if you insist on buying these things…

WWE WRESTLEMANIA XIX — 68
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/85
Clumsy interface, limited CAW parts and irritating Story mode. Still, it'll sell by the shedload, no matter what its flaws are.

X-MEN: NEXT DIMENSION — 55
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/75
Duller than dishwater. Fighting-by-numbers stuff that offers very little of interest. Total waste of a pretty cool licence, too.

X-MEN 2 WOLVERINE'S REVENGE — 64
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/82
Is he a man? Is he a wolf? Is he a genetically engineered super-soldier with hillbilly hair? Fighting with the clawed X-Man.

ZOOCUBE — 50
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/71
Puzzle game involving a rotating mouth that sucks animal genitals and goes 'moo', 'oink', 'roar', 'quack' and 'wah!'



EXPERT TIPS, TOUGH CHALLENGES, TRIVIA AND MORE

NGC EXTENDED PLAY





Puzzling over those final viewtiful unlockables? Don't worry – here's how it's done... P94

CONTENTS

A concise guide to the informative guts within...

94 **TIPS EXTRA**
We take care of our own and that means you. The Simpsons, Dakar 2 and more.

98 **I'M THE BEST**
Reckon you're the Daddy when it comes to 'Cube tickling? Don't keep it to yourself – if you win we'll bag you up a marvellous prize.

104 **GAME ON**
Not quite the secret of eternal life but who wants that anyway? Play games for longer!

106 **MAILBOX**
Stuff you write gets printed right here on these pages. Scribble us down the thoughts that are twisting your melon.

109 **NEXT MONTH**
The suspense will probably kill you. Try to hang on though – it'll be worth it.

110 **SUBSCRIBE HERE**
Get a free gamepad AND your favourite mag delivered. Like a pizza but better.

112 **COMPENDIUM**
Speak some choice Japanese words like a native – you might impress someone!

114 **END GC**
A little treat for you right at the end. Don't go and spoil it by looking now.

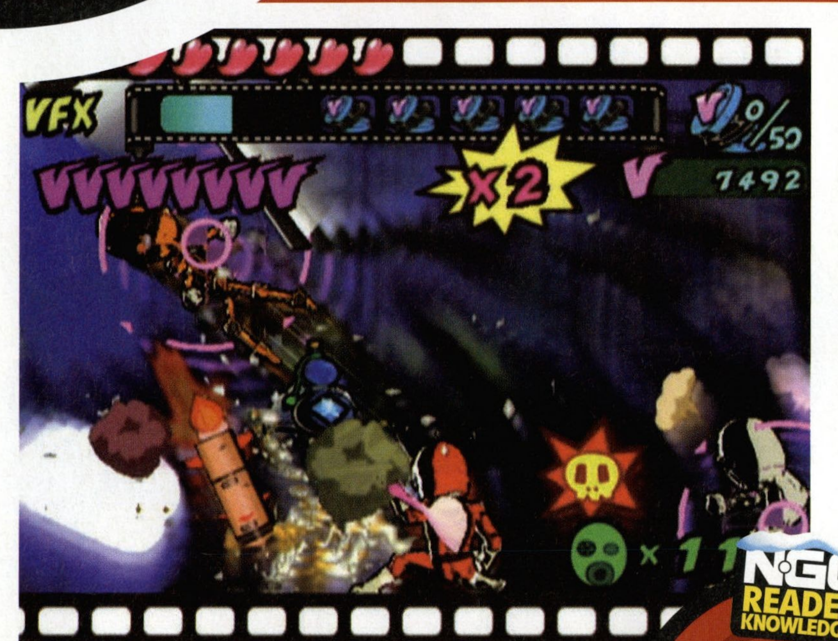
I'M THE BEST: Come and have a go if you think you're hard enough. New challenges aplenty in ITB2.1.

△ MAILBOX: What happened when Mario got down and dirty, plus a nice bit of Manjiki. Resistance is futile.

NGC GUARANTEE
TIPS, CHEATS
PROBLEMS SOLVED
EVERYTHING
YOU NEED!

THE TIPS YOU NEED FOR THE GAMES YOU'RE PLAYING...

TIPS EXTRA





THE SIMPSONS HIT & RUN

UNLOCK ITCHY AND SCRATCHY CARTOON
To unlock the Itchy and Scratchy cartoon, collect all 49 collector cards in the game, then play as Lisa and go to the comic shop. There you will receive the ticket. Take the ticket to the cineplex and you will be able to watch the cartoon.

UNLOCK CHRISTMAS MENU SCREEN
Set the date on your Gamecube's internal clock to Christmas (25th December). When you go to the game's menu screen (Homer snoozing on the sofa), Homer will be dressed in a Santa suit and there will be a Christmas tree in the corner of the room.

UNLOCK THANKSGIVING MENU SCREEN
Set the date on your Gamecube's internal clock to Thanksgiving (the last Thursday in November). When you go to the menu screen, Homer will be wearing a pilgrim's hat and there will be a cornucopia on the lamp table.

UNLOCK HALLOWEEN MENU SCREEN
Set the date on your Gamecube's internal clock to Halloween (31st October). When you enter the game's menu screen, it will be dark outside, and there will be pumpkin lanterns scattered across the room.

CHEAT CODES
Go to the the Options menu, hold the L+R triggers and enter one of the following button codes:

UNLOCK ALL CARS
A, B, A, B

INFINITE CAR HEALTH
Y, A, Y, A

BLOW UP VEHICLES INSTANTLY
Y, Y, X, X

ALTERNATE SECRET CARS
B, B, Y, X

FASTER CARS
Y, Y, Y, Y

MORE CAMERA ANGLES
B, B, B, A

PRESS HORN TO JUMP
X, X, X, Y

SHOW SPEEDOMETER
Y, Y, B, X

GRID MODE
B, A, B, Y

NGC READER KNOWLEDGE!

To defeat the armoured machine gunners in Freedom Fighters, send in three or four of your men and let them take care of them. They stand a much better chance of surviving than you do.
Gareth Dyer, Morecombe.

DAKAR 2

CHEAT PASSWORDS
Enter these codes at the password screen for the specified effects:

UNLOCK ALL CARS
SWEETAS

UNLOCK ALL TRACKS
BONZER

LOST KINGDOMS 2

UNLOCKABLE CHARACTERS
Here's how to access all the unlockable characters for use in Vs mode...

LEOD VIII
Beat Leod in the Royal Tower (middle level) and then save your game.

RASHIANNU
Beat the upper level of the Royal Tower and then save your game.

URBUR CULTIST
Beat the Cultist you find in battle. Save your game and he'll be marked as 'Unknown' on the Character Selection screen. But you know who he is.

THALNOS
First beat Helena and Leod in Area 2. Now head over the northernmost door to find Thalnos. Simply beat Thalnos (before saving your game) to unlock him.

KATIA
First beat Thalnos and then head over to another arena and fight Katia. Beat her, save the game and you'll unlock her.

KENDARIE WARRIOR
Beat the Kendarie Card Master boss in the first region. Save your game.

HELINA
Beat the neutral element boss in Area 2 and head west to another arena to fight Helina. To win you need Skill Level 6 or higher. Once she's fallen, save your game to unlock her

VIEWTIFUL JOE

As if the game wasn't hard enough, there are actually some hidden difficulty levels and unlockable treats to uncover, as well as some fantastic new secret characters.

V RATED MODE
Finish the game on Adult difficulty.

VIEWTIFUL WORLD VIDEO
Finish the game on Kids difficulty.

ULTRA V RATED
Finish the game on V-Rated difficulty.

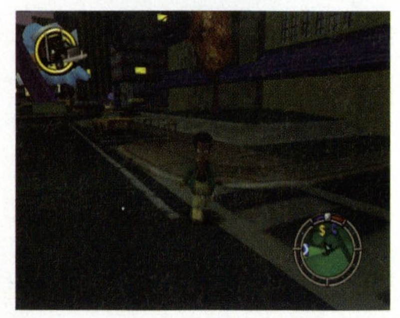
SUPER UNLIMITED VFX
Finish the game with a Rainbow V ranking for every level (on Adult difficulty). Then, when you have to select a character, choose one and press Z.

UNLOCKABLE CHARACTERS:$ JOE'S GIRLFRIEND
Finish the game on Adult difficulty.

CAPTAIN BLUE
Finish the game on V-Rated difficulty.

ALASTOR
Finish the game on Ultra V-Rated difficulty.

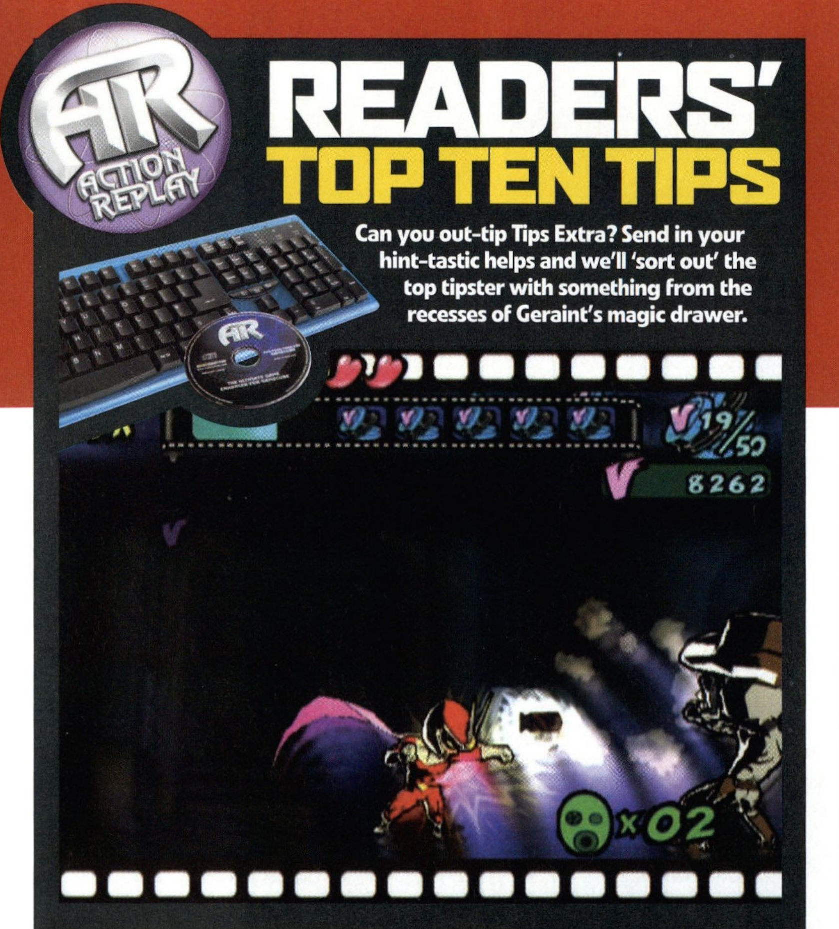






READERS' TOP TEN TIPS

Can you out-tip Tips Extra? Send in your hint-tastic helps and we'll 'sort out' the top tipster with something from the recesses of Geraint's magic drawer.



1. VIEWTIFUL JOE

Final Boss

Buy 100 Voomerangs and, as soon as the fight starts, jump and mach speed kick. When the boss comes forward use Voomerangs and press 'slow' when they hit him. You will always stop him from attacking.
Rachel Price, Lancaster

2. SMASH BROS MELEE
Ultimate Home Run
Use Jigglypuff and hit the sack until it gets to the edge. Now hit it in the air, jump and perform rest (Down+B). The sack will drop into you and you'll send it flying. I've managed 262 like this.
Daniel Cadman, Powys

3. THE SIMS
My little eye
Type FISHEYES at the Cheat menu (accessed by pressing L+R on the title screen) to see through the eyes of your little sims.
Tom Armstrong, Hartlepool

4. TIMESPLITTERS 2
Ufopia glitch
On Arcade Custom mode, choose Flame Tag and then Ufopia as the level. Pick up Max Speed and run outside to the hole where you see four UFO ships below. Run onto the ledge above them and you'll hover in the middle of space.
Daniel Cadman, Powys

5. ZELDA: WIND WAKER
Quick Iron Knuckles kill
To kill Iron Knuckles quickly, lower your sword and shield just before he attacks and the 'counterattack' symbol will flash. Hit A to get him at his most vulnerable spot.
William Collinson, Ripon

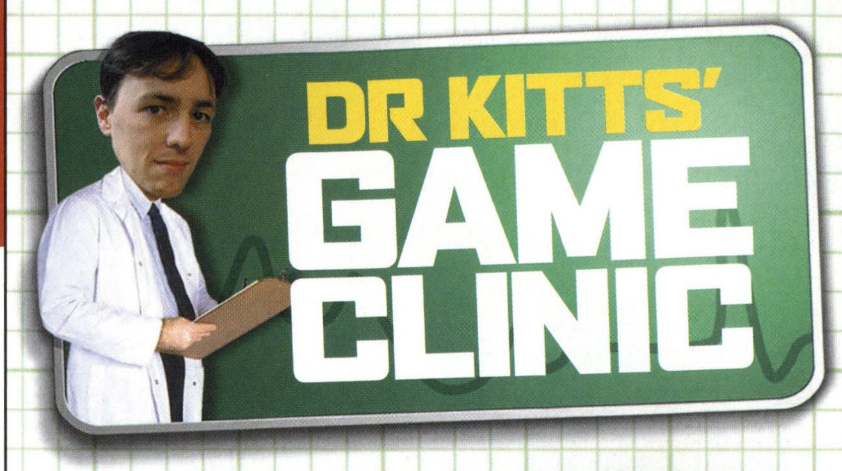
6. 007: NIGHTFIRE
Cheeky shortcut
On Island Infiltration, keep to the right of the road until you reach a clump of grass with two statues behind it. Drive into it and along the passage. You'll find a 007 bonus move here and you'll skip the bridge over the waterfall.
Mathew Costello, Liverpool

7. METROID PRIME
Meta Ridley
To kill Meta Ridley easily, just use your Wave Buster. The second he opens his mouth, unleash it and keep using it. It'll go from his mouth to his chest, constantly draining him.
Sam Davies, Chester

8. VIEWTIFUL JOE
Hulk smashed
Right at the very beginning, dodge Hulk Davidson's axe three times and hit him when he rams the wall. Now stay close and dodge his axe again and hit him when he charges the wall again. Rinse and repeat and you won't have to worry about the missiles.
Sam Deas, Hawick

9. FINAL FANTASY ADV
EXP boost
Don't just head straight to the missions. Spend some time picking off the wandering clans for extra EXP.
Rick Lee, Hull

10. SOUL CALIBUR 2
Much cheapness!
Killik and Seung Mina's windmill attack (Y+A) are great for cheaping through most of the Mission mode levels really easily and quickly.
Kelly Harwood, Leicester





Emptying the colostomy bag of gaming incompetence...

Dr Kitts,
I'm having serous trouble on the Diamond Cup on Expert in *F-Zero GX*. Do you have any tips?
David Gruber, Norwich

Dr Kitts kicks it 'til it breaks...
You don't have to win all the races in a cup to win overall. Obviously, you should make sure you win the first race because you can retry this one as often as you like. It's also worth spending loads of effort killing as many racers on Cosmo Terminal as you can. If you get rid of 10-15 racers on this track, your life will be much easier later. Sand Ocean may seem tricky at first, but there are enough pit lanes to allow you to boost constantly.

Next up, Fire Field. This is another track where you should concentrate on killing rival craft. Five racers should pose no problem as there are no sides to the course. Always make sure you bag an extra life here. Even if you think you're going to lose, always try to kill five racers before retrying. If you've been suitably aggressive over the cup's early stages, finishing between seventh and tenth finish on the last couple of races should see you through fine.

Dr Kitts,
On the second level of *Viewtiful Joe* there's this bit where a bus keeps driving to the edge of a gap in the road (filled with water). I assume I'm supposed to be jumping over it, but no matter what I do, the bus always lands in the water.
Tristan Watkins, Gloucester

Dr Kitts gets hot and sweaty in his latex body suit.
Not exactly the most logical puzzle in the world, this. Basically, you have to jump onto the bus as soon as possible and use your 'Slow' VFX to power up the bus' jet thruster thingies.

Now the trick is to let go of the L button before you reach the top of the jump over the gap. If you do it right, you should fly over.

Oh, and make sure you collect plenty of VFX film cans in the sections of the level beforehand. If you get to the bus section without enough VFX, you may find yourself in a spot of bother.

Dr Kitts,
Why does Vanilla Coke taste nothing like vanilla? It just tastes of cream soda.
Michael Dunn, email

Dr Kitts wipes his fat, sticky fingers on his trousers.
Brown cream soda, eh? Brown. Cream. Soda. Buuuuuurp!



Soul Calibur 2, eh? P.N.03 is it? Don't mind if we do...

P.N.03

MASTER CODE
1 ZH5H-2KPR-1CZ8D
2 FRTC-JF7X-WBY21

Infinite Health
1 TY49-9Y3J-PNEMZ
2 8FNR-9TAE-A9134

Infinite Continues
1 JU0V-FJCU-0KRY4
2 RKPD-Q6GB-EZWA3

Infinite Points
1 QE2M-VBWP-YJC29
2 A9BT-5KDD-W97WC

All The Aegis Suits
1 U2YD-PY1B-RBUUB
2 JZBX-47XX-Q89NV
3 QH25-R584-26FY3

All Aegis Suit Stats Maxed
1 6FPM-0A7G-J76VJ
2 CCMK-U09J-ET2RK
3 6JDK-GNR3-A3CRM
4 65RN-NQXH-TNXB8
5 4NF1-HJCJ-M21UV

Infinite Combo Time
1 PQAP-HZF9-N5MQC
2 ZFMA-TCH3-KEDNF

SOUL CALIBUR 2

MASTER CODE
1 J6GA-JP3N-6FYAE
2 H7Y9-BV66-RDZ55

Player 1: Infinite Health
1 KAHJ-Q2HW-29HPW
2 X4QD-DYUX-CC5EP

Player 1: Hypermode
1 FVHY-KAQW-08V68
2 CCBT-3NBX-DR169

Player 1: SlowMo
1 145X-NPJC-PE6ZK
2 ZQ5F-RTTB-7VXXP

Player 1: Uses Mitsurugi Moves
1 GT9V-BCFK-FMK61
2 40C1-UZV4-HMD0C

Player 1: Uses Seung Mina Moves
1 TN17-W2JP-P1MQ8
2 FA8V-QM8K-T7YKV

Player 1: Uses Taki Moves
1 PTKM-87ZF-P2PRZ
2 FMK5-3U7B-W5AM1

Player 1: Uses Maxi Moves
1 AX91-74FQ-6J711
2 760P-CEFA-X3Z1Z

Player 1: Uses Voldo Moves
1 84U2-HWHX-CMVN5
2 BYUY-K2V5-GX2T4

Player 1: Uses Sophita Moves
1 6KEW-DF00-10E5Q
2 CG91-EU2Y-05F3U

Player 1: Uses Ivy Moves
1 HV7Z-VH9K-8F4KR
2 TQZD-VUD3-W4782

Player 1: Uses Kilik Moves
1 9BVZ-1J8B-ZATYN
2 HFTA-094E-ZU77P

Player 1: Uses Xianghua Moves
1 1JQB-A78R-YU616
2 WWFC-QXGB-7E8FD

Player 1: Uses Yoshimitsu Moves
1 82DZ-7KT3-0YVCE
2 EBW9-F39Z-R85JT

Player 1: Uses Nightmare Moves
1 R78Z-5GFA-8ZH44
2 R8KZ-07V7-XD104

Player 1: Uses Astaroth Moves
1 24ED-D1FD-1ZANH
2 NZE4-0XF6-NWN26

Player 1: Uses Cervantes Moves
1 VKY3-TDVT-FY4Y8
2 YDPC-DMZQ-CZHHE

Player 1: Uses Talim Moves
1 DTTR-TMR0-2U8KA
2 H5AG-M07X-Q9UXU

Player 1:
Uses Raphael Moves
1 J479-06TR-P19CT
2 3XTY-DHFB-GU91R

Player 1:
Uses Cassandra Moves
1 6M5X-FM75-V15YX
2 XGD1-8U0Z-7AMRT

Player 1:
Uses Charade Moves
1 GN2Z-HB87-CC7U7
2 VXGD-2XCK-UV0AN

Player 1: Uses Link Moves
1 XZC3-1JE7-JPY91
2 5WAR-YKE5-QP3AX

Player 1: Uses Necrid Moves
1 FTGM-X6UG-DVYVP
2 TPNB-2573-GKJB4

Player 1: Uses Yunsung Moves
1 RVND-X17U-JB3EW
2 K50A-TNKX-FJPA7

Player 1: Uses Lizardman Moves
1 HHJQ-GE8R-Z8GBE
2 FVMP-B4Z0-EX1P7

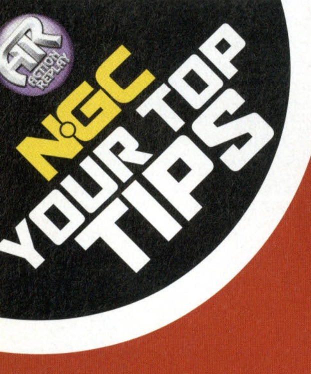
Player 1: Uses Assassin Moves
1 10CA-Z7PJ-JMA21
2 VZ4W-K0F5-XNPJY

Player 1: Uses Berserker Moves
1 RZFC-KK45-219CY
2 V6D5-DUAU-R2QT9

Unlock Everything
1 Q327-6780-WCWCV
2 UU4B-1ZM5-481A7



YOUR TOP TIPS SHARE THE KNOWLEDGE AND BAG YOURSELF A PRIZE...



Found an interesting tip, secret or quirky thing in one of your games? Send it into us immediately! Each month we'll stick the best into our Readers' Tips section. If your tip is the number one readers' tip, we'll send you a luvverly prize. Good, huh? But don't send us cheat codes from the net. Quirky!



HERE'S MY TOP TIP...

IT'S FOR

AND THIS IS HOW IT WORKS

Name ....

Address ....

..........Postcode

Send to:
TIPS EXTRA, **NGC**, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW or e-mail ngc@futurenet.co.uk

If you don't want to cut up your magazine, send a photocopy instead, and continue on another bit of paper if you run out of room. Or just buy two copies of the mag. That way you can keep a spare copy in the khazi, to help focus your mind.



AND NOW… WITNESS THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF THESE ARMED AND FULLY OPERATIONAL GAMING LEAGUES!

I'M THE BEST

WIN!

Oi-oi! We've got loads of new challenges for you this month. New games and old favourites, simple challenges and granite-tough ones – there's sure to be something here that you can join in with.

As you can see, some of the long-term entrants are doing really well. They're very skilled but, more importantly, they've entered lots of challenges, not just the main ones. They've committed mass murder for Kittsy, taken on Go-Sen's tasks and dressed up for public humiliation and bonus points.

It's never too late to join in the fun, so please enter. If you want some hints and tips, check out the discussions going on on the Gamesradar.com forums. (Younger gamers, tell a parent that you want to want to look at the forum so they don't worry, okay?)

Finally, in a move sure to please lots of people, we're accepting digital photos. Send your screen snaps to NGC@futurenet.co.uk. The subject line of your email must read like this:

ITB: The challenge name: your score - eg, ITB: F-Zero GX Aeropolis Time Attack: 2'28"264.

Please only attach ONE digital photo to each email. This is so that, if you send us several entries for one challenge, we can dump any scores you've bettered. If you put the wrong subject line, your email may be disregarded. If you tweak your pics (and we can tell), you'll be disqualified.

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE!

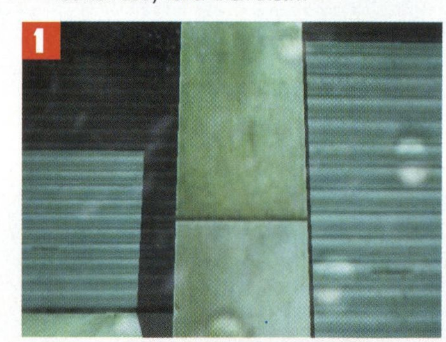
Largely because our poor, throbbing heads could no longer brook the biting, handbag fights and bitter complaints it engendered, and also because it was rubbish, we've replaced the tired and ailing Star Performance with Mission Impossible. Your mission? To follow our instructions to the letter, however keeerazy they may be. And it could be anything. We've lowered the points for this so that we could award them to every correct entry, not just the first one we get…

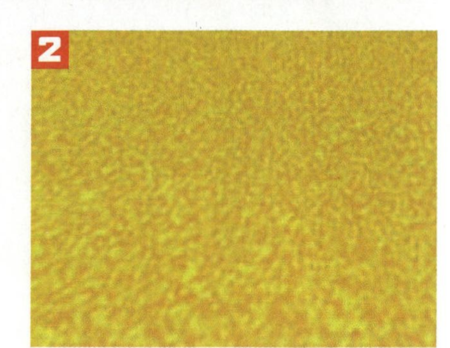
THIS MONTH… TEXTURE HUNT

We want you to flex the old mind muscle this month in an attempt to recognise and rememberise which games and locations these textures are from. Simple as that.

For each picture we'll require the title of the game that the shot is from, as well as the level, or rough location where they were taken. (Hint: there's a 'trick question' in there mind!) Send in your entry so it reaches us by the **19th December**. If you manage to get them all right, Miriam will award every correct entry with a very generous **35 lovely shiny points**.

You can't say fairer than that…


1

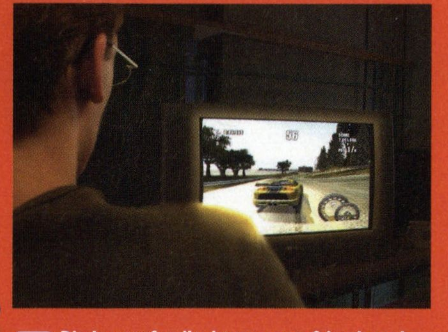

2


3


4

BEAT THE BEST!

Come and have a go if you think they're hard enough! This is how you turn your talent into a shot at a stonking prize.



1 Ditch your family, ignore your friends and practise until you have achieved perfection. But not beyond the cut-off date. That'd be dim.



2 Get a score above our 'To Qualify' minimum – you don't have to beat the top 5. Gather the evidence (video/photo) and send it to us.



3 Wait an issue or two and see where your score gets you. The more challenges you nail, the higher you climb in the table…

NEW!

I'M THE BEST

The Best just got even Better…

MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!





TOUR DOMINATOR

WE WANT You to win by as many points as you can on the All Cup Tour.
THE LAW 1 racer, 150cc only. You can pick anycharacters/vehicles.
TO QUALIFY 30 point lead
EVIDENCE A picture of the end of tour results screen.
POINTS 45

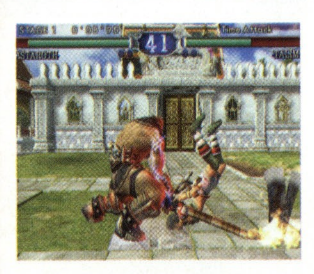
1	???	Your name here	Next month!
2	???	Your name here	Next month!
3	???	Your name here	Next month!
4	???	Your name here	Next month!
5	???	Your name here	Next month!

HEAVY RIDER

WE WANT Best time on Yoshi Circuit using DK and Bowser
THE LAW Must be in 150cc GP.
TO QUALIFY Time of 2'10'000 with 30 points (20 points from previous two races, +10).
EVIDENCE A photo of the time and score data after the race.
POINTS 30

1	???	Your name here	Next month!
2	???	Your name here	Next month!
3	???	Your name here	Next month!
4	???	Your name here	Next month!
5	???	Your name here	Next month!

SOUL CALIBUR 2





TIME ROTH

WE WANT Your fastest time for the standard Time Attack.
THE LAW You must use Astaroth, and you're not allowed to play the 'Extra' version of the mode.
TO QUALIFY 5 minutes
EVIDENCE A snap of the Time Attack ranking screen.
POINTS 25

1	2'55"38	Matthew Pellett	Spalding
2	4'27"03	Steve Brooks	Broughton Astley
3	4'10"60	Phil "PH" Hughes	Cheshire
4	3'54"18	Peter Bottomley	Cheshire
5	???	Your name here	Next month!

CHAIN IMPACT

WE WANT You to Guard Impact as many attacks as you can.
THE LAW If you're hit, thrown or do a standard guard, it's over.
TO QUALIFY 10 consecutive GIs
EVIDENCE Video of the opening bout of Arcade mode, including the selection of the mode.
POINTS 35

1	???	Your name here	Next month!
2	???	Your name here	Next month!
3	???	Your name here	Next month!
4	???	Your name here	Next month!
5	???	Your name here	Next month!

To spice things up a bit, you'll notice that we've also included extraneous Random Challenges – which can be related to games, or be completely whimsical. Again, fulfil our wishes to the letter and points will be yours. Simple. There's even a Spot the Ball competition (it's Spot Andrea this month, but it can be anything ball-related. Or not). Keray-zee…

VIRTUAL REALITY YOU!

Prats win prizes!

THIS MONTH

DONKEY WRONGA

Come on. You knew this day would come. This special, special day where we ask you to… **Dress up as Donkey Kong (or any kind of monkey as long as you're wearing a red tie) and go to your local grocers to buy some bananas.** We want a picture of you at the checkout, bananas in hand, handing over cold hard cash. Entries we receive by 19th December win 70 points. Now don't say we never give you anything.



ROGUE SQUADRON III: REBEL STRIKE

ESCAPE FROM YAVIN

WE WANT Fastest time for Revenge of the Empire
THE LAW 120 kills minimum.
TO QUALIFY 5'00
EVIDENCE Pic of the level's record screen.
POINTS 20

1	???	Your name here	Next month!
2	???	Your name here	Next month!
3	???	Your name here	Next month!
4	???	Your name here	Next month!
5	???	Your name here	Next month!

A-WING EXECUTOR

WE WANT As many kills as you can get on Attack on the Executor.
THE LAW You must get bronze.
TO QUALIFY 80
EVIDENCE Pic of results screen.
POINTS 30

1	???	Your name here	Next month!
2	???	Your name here	Next month!
3	???	Your name here	Next month!
4	???	Your name here	Next month!
5	???	Your name here	Next month!



NGC TEAM SPOT THE BALL

X MARKS THE EX-EDITOR

Backing away from tradition once again folks. This month we still want you to spot the ball - only this time the small, leathery pigs bladder hidden away is ex N64 Editor Miss 'Andrea Ball'.

Have a look at this old-school pic of the team and pick out which shadowy figure she's hiding under.

❑ The entry we receive marking the point closest to Andrea Ball by Friday 19th December wins **20 points.**

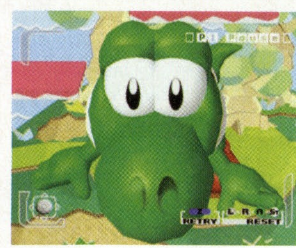
SEND YOUR ENTRIES TO… I'M THE BEST, **NGC** MAGAZINE, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW

NEW!

I'M THE BEST

The Best just got even Better…

SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE



YOSHI BASHING

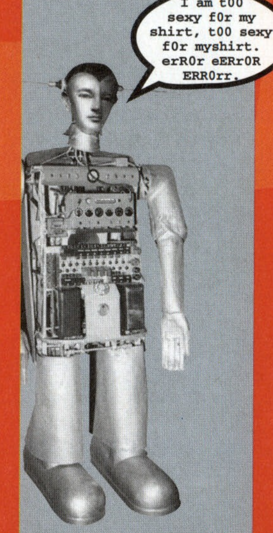
WE WANT Fastest time on Event Match Lv 4, Dino Wrangling.
THE LAW Must use Roy. No lives lost.
TO QUALIFY 45 seconds
EVIDENCE Video footage of the entire bout.
POINTS 20

1	???	Your name here Next month!
2	???	Your name here Next month!
3	???	Your name here Next month!
4	???	Your name here Next month!
5	???	Your name here Next month!

HAMMER TIME

SOOO… As many KOs as possible in 2min melee match.
THE LAW Hammer only item. V.High appearance. CPU lv1, Play as Kirby vs 3 Puffs in Eagleland.
TO QUALIFY 10 KOs
EVIDENCE A video, please.
POINTS 25

1	???	Your name here Next month!
2	???	Your name here Next month!
3	???	Your name here Next month!
4	???	Your name here Next month!
5	???	Your name here Next month!



DAVID GOSEN'S INHUMAN GAMING EFFICIENCY DIRECTIVE

1011101010110010110110… You're pathetic. You greasy organic constructs failed my last challenge miserably and so I'm making it a little easier for you weasely little meatlings. I am offering 101.01 'points' to whoever can:

In Soul Calibur 2, survive 20 bouts in survival mode using Taki. The average time per bout must be under 10 seconds. Your total time must be less than three minutes and 20 seconds. This time however, I will allow you rancid bipeds to use any weapon you like in the 'Extra Survival Mode' - yes, even the meat sticks.

I expect you to manage it this time. As your superior sentient form I command you to respect my generosity. The first entry to make it to me by 19th December will claim the points. As ever, all other entries will be assimilated into the Gosen Hive to further the technological revolution.

F-ZERO GX



COSMO CARNAGE

WE WANT Your highest possible kill count on Cosmo Terminal.
THE LAW You must use the Golden Fox in the Grand Prix on Master difficulty and – get this – *win.*
TO QUALIFY 15 kills
EVIDENCE Video only, showing you selecting Master difficulty.
POINTS 35

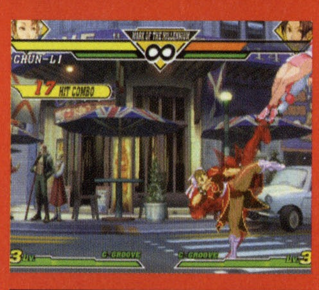
1	???	Your name here Next month!
2	???	Your name here Next month!
3	???	Your name here Next month!
4	???	Your name here Next month!
5	???	Your name here Next month!

HEAVY RIDER

WE WANT Your fastest race time down Aeropolis: Multiplex.
THE LAW You must use any original vehicle. No custom machines allowed.
TO QUALIFY 2'28"000
EVIDENCE A shot of the Time Attack ranking table. Warning: DO NOT use the time from your records data.
POINTS 30

1	2'19"346	Steve Brooks Broughton Astley
2	???	Your name here Next month!
3	???	Your name here Next month!
4	???	Your name here Next month!
5	???	Your name here Next month!

CAPCOM VS SNK



COMBO EXHIBITION

WE WANT Your highest combo using any character.
THE LAW C-Groove, Ratio 4, and AC mode only. Combo can be executed in Training mode.
TO QUALIFY 22 hit combo
EVIDENCE Video of the combo in action.
POINTS 35

1	???	Your name here Next month!
2	???	Your name here Next month!
3	???	Your name here Next month!
4	???	Your name here Next month!
5	???	Your name here Next month!

BURNOUT 2



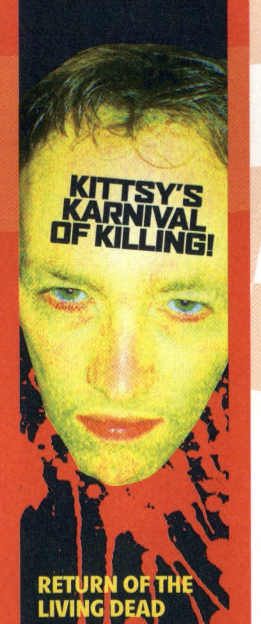
HEART BREAK TRIAL

WE WANT Your best overall time on the Heart Break Hills track.
THE LAW None really, you can use whatever car you want but not on the reversed version of the track.
TO QUALIFY 1'43"000
EVIDENCE A picture of the records screen you get after the race.
POINTS 25

1	???	Your name here Next month!
2	???	Your name here Next month!
3	???	Your name here Next month!
4	???	Your name here Next month!
5	???	Your name here Next month!

WIN!

SEND YOUR ENTRIES TO… I'M THE BEST, NGC MAGAZINE, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW



RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD

I'm back on form, and I'm keeping things clean and simple for this month.

Playing *Rogue Leader*, I want you to **kill as much as you can on the Endurance level.** The reader to send proof of the most kills by the 19th of December will be awarded the points..

Send in videotaped or photgraphic evidence of your evil deeds - the results screen will suffice – and win **30 points**.



WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM





TIME TRIAL #1

WE WANT Your fastest overall time on the Lost Temple course.
THE LAW Must be attempted in Expert mode – using any character you want.
TO QUALIFY A time of 1'32'000
EVIDENCE A simple snap (film or digital) or video of your records screen, clearly indicating that expert mode was attempted.
POINTS 25

1	???	Your name here Next month!
2	???	Your name here Next month!
3	???	Your name here Next month!
4	???	Your name here Next month!
5	???	Your name here Next month!

TIME TRIAL #2

WE WANT Your fastest lap time on Aspen lake.
THE LAW Once again, this challenge needs to be attempted on the Expert difficulty setting. You can use any character you want.
TO QUALIFY We need to see a time of 0'24'000
EVIDENCE A video or photo of your records screen.
POINTS 20

1	???	Your name here Next month!
2	???	Your name here Next month!
3	???	Your name here Next month!
4	???	Your name here Next month!
5	???	Your name here Next month!

SSX3



PEAK 2 TRIAL

WE WANT Your Peak 2 Race time.
THE LAW Use Kaori. You can configure her stats as you wish.
TO QUALIFY 15:00
EVIDENCE Video yourself selecting Transport from the Pause menu, picking Peak 2 Race, and the run.
POINTS 25

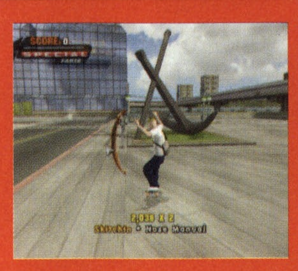
1	???	Your name here Next month!
2	???	Your name here Next month!
3	???	Your name here Next month!
4	???	Your name here Next month!
5	???	Your name here Next month!

SLOPE STYLIN'

WE WANT Your best score for the final heat of the R&B – Slopestyle (Peak 1).
THE LAW Use any character you like – with any stats.
TO QUALIFY 450,000 points
EVIDENCE A pic of the final 'Top 5' results screen will suffice.
POINTS 35

1	???	Your name here Next month!
2	???	Your name here Next month!
3	???	Your name here Next month!
4	???	Your name here Next month!
5	???	Your name here Next month!

TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND





GRINDLESS COMBO

WE WANT Your best combo score on any level.
THE LAW You're not allowed to grind at all.
TO QUALIFY 150,000 score
EVIDENCE A short video clip of the combo from start to finish.
POINTS 25

1	???	Your name here Next month!
2	???	Your name here Next month!
3	???	Your name here Next month!
4	???	Your name here Next month!
5	???	Your name here Next month!

OLLIE OLLIE OLLIE

WE WANT Your highest score off three separate tricks busted on on flat ground.
THE LAW No manuals. No grinds.
TO QUALIFY 1200 points from three tricks.
EVIDENCE Video of three tricks.
POINTS 20

1	???	Your name here Next month!
2	???	Your name here Next month!
3	???	Your name here Next month!
4	???	Your name here Next month!
5	???	Your name here Next month!



SEND YOUR ENTRIES TO… I'M THE BEST, NGC MAGAZINE, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW

NEW!

I'M THE BEST

The Best just got even Better…

HITMAN 2

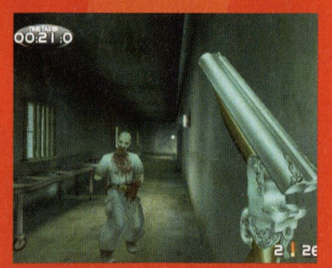


THE HAYAMTO HIT

WE WANT Your fastest time on the 'Tracking Hayamoto' level.
THE LAW You must achieve a Silent Assassin rating – no killing civilians or setting alarms off.
TO QUALIFY 5:00m
EVIDENCE A clear picture of the final status screen will be fine.
POINTS 45

1	03:42m	**Matthew Pellett** Spalding
2	???	**Your name here** Next month!
3	???	**Your name here** Next month!
4	???	**Your name here** Next month!
5	???	**Your name here** Next month!

TIMESPLITTERS 2



RHYTHM STICK

WE WANT Your fastest time on 'Hit me baby one morgue time'.
THE LAW No laws as such – but it'll help if you finish the level.
TO QUALIFY 2:00
EVIDENCE A picture of the results screen where it's possible to see what the challenge was.
POINTS 25

1	53.5s	**Phil "PH" Hughes** Cheshire
5	53.6	**Andrew Mills** Dundee
2	53.7	**Matthew Pellett** Spalding
3	55.0	**Peter Bottomley** Cheshire
4	55.2	**Dave "Sphinx" Pugh** Saffron Walden



CRUSTY ANALOGUE'S RETRO CHEAT

In celebration of some of you bleedin' toe-rags' dubious ITB entries…

We're taking you back in time! **We want you to dig out your old copy of *GoldenEye* and get the fastest time possible on the Dam level on 00 Agent difficulty with 100 per cent heatshots**. The trick here is that you can cheat using any devious means necessary - invisibility, invincibility, anything. Take a pic of the final records screen and **the reader who sends in the fastest time by the 19th December will get himself 50 points.** Now get

FIFA 2004



GERAINT'S FANTASY

WE WANT You to thrash Cardiff City using Swansea City.
THE LAW No memory cards, default settings.
TO QUALIFY 10 goal lead
EVIDENCE Video from the no mem card screen to the final result.
POINTS 30

1	xxxx	**xxxxxxx** xxxxxxxxxx
2	xxxx	**xxxxxxx** xxxxxxxxxx
3	xxxx	**xxxxxxx** xxxxxxxxxx
4	xxxx	**xxxxxxx** xxxxxxxxxx
5	xxxx	**xxxxxxx** xxxxxxxxxx

IKARUGA



ROBOT CHALLENGE #3

WE WANT Your highest chain on the third level.
THE LAW No law. Use any difficulty you want.
TO QUALIFY 40
EVIDENCE A picture of the final results screen is fine.
POINTS 30

1	96	**Phil "PH" Hughes** Cheshire
2	42	**Peter Bottomley** Cheshire
3	xxxx	**xxxxxxx** xxxxxxxxxx
4	xxxx	**xxxxxxx** xxxxxxxxxx
5	xxxx	**xxxxxxx** xxxxxxxxxx

BILLY HATCHER



FOREST SALESMAN TIME ATTACK

WE WANT Your fastest time on MIssion Four in Forest Village…
THE LAW There is no law.
TO QUALIFY 2.00
EVIDENCE Picture of the level's records screen.
POINTS 20

1	00	**Your name here** Next month!
2	00	**Your name here** Next month!
3	00	**Your name here** Next month!
4	00	**Your name here** Next month!
5	00	**Your name here** Next month!



SPECIAL RANKING

WE WANT You to achieve as many S-Ranks as you can.
THE LAW None really, just get those S-Ranks.
TO QUALIFY 15
EVIDENCE A video of all your S-Rank records.
POINTS 30

1	00	**Your name here** Next month!
2	00	**Your name here** Next month!
3	00	**Your name here** Next month!
4	00	**Your name here** Next month!
5	00	**Your name here** Next month!

SEND YOUR ENTRIES TO… I'M THE BEST, NGC MAGAZINE, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW



When sending us evidence of your achievements, it's useful to follow these here steps…

PHOTOGRAPHS

If you're sending us evidence of the photographic variety:

1. Turn off the camera's flash (or cover it up) to prevent it from reflecting off the screen.
2. Draw the curtains to eradicate sunlight.
3. Use a fast film (200 or 400 ASA).
4. If you're using a digicam then use a slower shutter speed.
5. Point at the screen and click away.

PLEASE NOTE: In the past we've had experience of certain scamps 'fiddling' with their photographic evidence, so this time round we're being extra-specially (is that right?) careful. We would, in fact, welcome video evidence over photographic evidence. If, however, you can only send photos, be warned: any doubts over the legality of your entry will lead to instant disqualification, and malicious jeering.

VIDEO

If you're going to be sending us the evidence that comes on a tape, follow the instructions below carefully:

1. Plug the TV lead from the Gamecube into the Signal In socket of your video.
2. Connect the Signal Out socket on your video to your TV.
3. Find a spare channel on the video and search for the signal.
4. After completing and recording the challenge, rewind the tape and send it in. We can't return tapes, sorry.

THE LEADERBOARD

MONTH 2: WHERE ARE YOU NOW?…

1 **Matthew Pellett** Spalding	**1616.01pts**
2 **Phil "PH" Hughes** Cheshire	**1487.02pts**
3 **Rex McGee** Trowbridge	**1431.01pts**
4 **Andrew Mills** Dundee	**1192.02pts**
5 **Steve Brooks** Broughton Astley	**1172.02pts**
7 **Dave Every** Ellesmere Port	**912.02pts**
8 **Dave "Sphinx" Pugh** Saffron Walden	**701.01pts**
9 **Michael Rothwell** Wallasey	**691.01pts**
10 **Bryan Docherty** Gourock	**625pts**
11 **Simon Mason** West Parley	**581.01pts**
12 **Rob Jones** Poole	**580pts**
13 **Dermot Ryan** Mullingar	**571.01pts**
14 **Dean Hailstone** Jarrow	**562.02pts**
15 **Barry Lewis** Dairsie	**560pts**
16 **Peter Bottomley** Cheshire	**550pts**
17 **Lewis Voigtländer-Ford** Milton Keynes	**510pts**
18 **Scott Littlewood** New Costessy	**445pts**
19 **Chris "plasticcoated" Fletcher** Stockport	**385pts**
20 **Michael Seaward** Stanley	**330pts**
21 **Gareth Brownlow** Kilrea	**325pts**
22 **Mr S** Aberdare	**315pts**
23 **David Williamson** Bathgate	**295pts**
24 **Eskil Vestre** Norway	**290pts**
25 **Andrew McGrae** Southport	**285pts**
26 **Dominic Stroud** Gloucester	**270pts**
27 **David Lent** Leeds, **Toby Lynch** London	**260pts**
28 **Banjo-Fella, Sam Rogerson** Milton Keynes	**235pts**
29 **Julia McClay** Langley Middleton, **Jason Leverett** Great Yarmouth	**220pts**
30 **Harold Rooney-Nugent** London, **David McDonald** Warwick	**215pts**

Each month, the totals will be totted up and balances displayed in the Big Table™. The top five spots at the end of the season win goodies – Numero Uno gets not only planet-wide admiration/envy in equal measure, but hard material goods. We keep track of every entrant's scores, so you can boost your points each month and move onto or up the list.

BUBBLING UNDER

Next month you could be on the board: Matthew Bickham; Thomas Cox; Michael Daniels; Paul Gibb; Norman Glover; Lee Graham; Michael Harvey; Josh Jones; Janne Kaitila; Ewan McKenzie; Andreas Nakkerud; Mark Puddifoot; Josh Ryan; Daniel Sneddon; Grant Taylor; James Walker; Adam Weston; Andy Whittle; Matthew Woof; and Gordon Yeung.





ENTRY FORM

FILL IN THE SCORES!

Name……………………………………

……………………………………

Address……………………………………

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Send to………………………I'M THE BEST,
NGC Magazine
30 Monmouth Street
Bath, BA1 2BW

If you don't want to cut up your magazine, send a photocopy instead, and continue on another bit of paper if you run out of room. Defaced or illegible papers will be disqualified and burned in the furnaces of Hell, *pour encourager les autres*.

MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!
- ❑ TOUR DOMINATOR ……………
- ❑ HEAVY RIDER ……………

SOUL CALIBUR 2
- ❑ TIME ROTH ……………
- ❑ CHAIN IMPACT ……………

REBEL STRIKE
- ❑ ESCAPE YAVIN ……………
- ❑ EXECUTOR ……………

SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE
- ❑ YOSHI BASHING ……………
- ❑ HAMMER TIME ……………

F-ZERO GX
- ❑ COSMO CARNAGE ……………
- ❑ AEROPOLIS TIME ATTACK ……………

WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM
- ❑ SNOWOFF ……………
- ❑ MADRID MASTER ……………

SSX3
- ❑ PEAK 2 TRIAL ……………
- ❑ SLOPE STYLIN' ……………

TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND
- ❑ GRINDLESS COMBO ……………
- ❑ OLLIE OLLIE OLLEIE ……………

CAPCOM VS NK
- ❑ COMBO EXHIBITION ……………

BURNOUT2
- ❑ HEART BREAK TRIAL ……………

HITMAN 2
- ❑ HIYAMOTO HIT ……………

TIMESPLITTERS2
- ❑ RHYTHM STICK ……………

FIFA 2004
- ❑ GERAINT'S FANTASY ……………

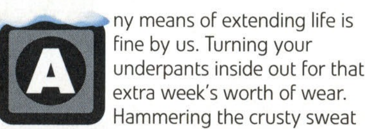
IKARUGA
- ❑ ROBO CHALLENGE ……………

BILLY HATCHER
- ❑ FOREST SALESMAN ……………
- ❑ SPECIAL RANKING ……………

HEY! IT'S THE CONTINUATION OF...

GAME ON!





Any means of extending life is fine by us. Turning your underpants inside out for that extra week's worth of wear. Hammering the crusty sweat patches out of your socks or bundling your dear old grandmother into a chest freezer to extend those handy benefit payments. Which brings us nicely to **Game On**, the part of the mag where you bend those old games of yours over a barrel, whip off your belt and spank their blubbery backsides into the middle of next week. Or rather, you send us your challenges so everyone can revisit those long-forgotten titles that have been lying under their beds for the past month. If you think you can do better than this month's efforts, just brain up a minigame and send it to the usual address.



ZELDA: WIND WAKER







PIG MATADOR

by **Jamie Purvis, Glasgow**

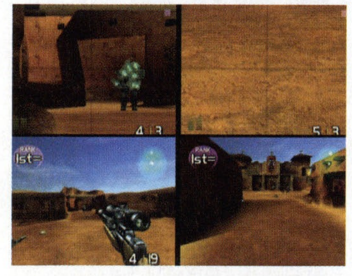
Ah, the simple ones are always the best. On *Zelda: Wind Waker* head on over to Outset Island (preferably at night) and go to the pen with the big black pig. Chuck it out of its enclosure and give it some with your sword until it starts going mental at you. Now, this is the tough bit. **Without the porker losing interest and without you using your shield, try to survive for as long as you can** without the pig killing you.

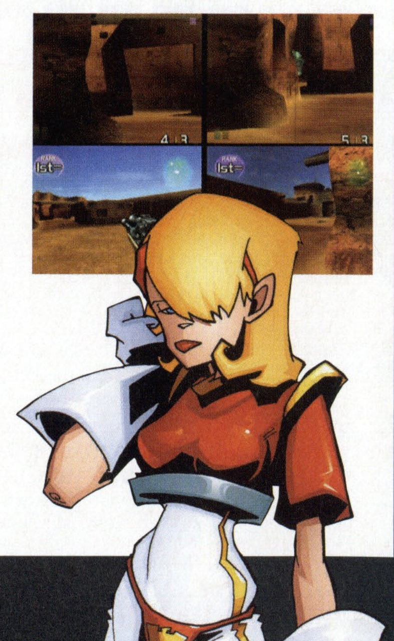
Your score will be graded in minutes – so if you manage to win gold on this one, you should definitely give yourself a hearty pat on the back. And then make a nice sausage sarnie…

MINUTES  3  2  1

TIMESPLITTERS 2







DUCK HUNT

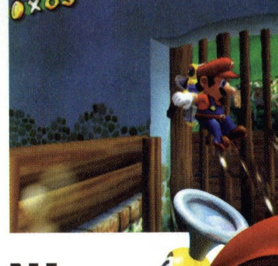
by **Alexander Ford, London**

Start a two-minute four-player deathmatch on the Mexican Mission level. Change the weapon set to only sniper rifles and remote mines and turn bots off. **Choose one player to be the 'duck' and cover them with mines.** They should then go and stand behind one of the two buildings opposite the fountain, while the other player(s) line up in front of the fountain with sniper rifles. The 'duck' then begins to run from behind one house to behind the other, and the other players have to shoot him. **See how many shots it takes you before he finally explodes…**

SHOTS FIRED  5  10  15

SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE





DURIAN DURIAN!

by **Karan Bhallan**

Go to Bianco Hills and choose shine 8. The challenge is to go the place where the trees, bees and fruit are. **Find the football fruit (durian) and see how far you can kick it up the windmill path without it landing in the drink.** You can boot over the guy on the bridge to help if you want. You can also dribble on the path on the hill and use Yoshi to get rid of hives and enemies. There are three markers you need to measure yourself on: a) hover nozzle and fountain near top, b) end of last hedge after bridge and c) end of the bridge. Score yourself by passing these markers. Good luck.

MARKER  **A**  **B**  **C**



SOUL CALIBUR 2





JUGGLE ME SENSELESS

by **Kathryn Convery, Essex**

Enter Practice mode with Link or another character of your choice. Make sure that the person you're facing doesn't move. Now go over with Link and press up and Y. This should do a upwards stab move and knock your opponent into the air (you might need a different move if playing as a different character). Now hit them while they're still in the air. Keep practising and see how many times you can hit them while they are in the air with this move.

HITS  **10**  **5-9**  **1-4**

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN...

Have you discovered a weird and wonderful new way to play Nintendo games? Can you sum it all up in about 100 words? If you have a challenge you'd like to share with other NGC readers, then we want to hear about it. Jot down a quick explanation of what you've got to do on a piece of paper, set three suitable levels of achievement for gold, silver and bronze medals, stick it in an envelope, and send it to...

GAME ON, NGC Magazine, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. Or email ngc@futurenet.co.uk, with Game On as the subject line.

We'll take challenges for absolutely any game on the good ol' 'Cube, but this month we're particularly interested in...



F-ZERO GX

SOUL CALIBUR 2



VIEWTIFUL JOE



BILLY HATCHER

THE BEST GET PRINTED RIGHT HERE, AND OUR FAVOURITE CHALLENGE WILL WIN A SHINY NEW GAMECUBE GAME. DEAL?

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MAILBOX

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Got something to say? Run out of stamps? Guards won't let you near a pen? Then log on to the interweb and 'get' us 'at'...

NGC@futurenet.co.uk

... right now! And please include your *name and address.* Oh, go on. Please.

STAR LETTER

The winner of the Star Letter receives a bundle of gaming gear courtesy of Joytech, incorporating two Advanced Controllers, a gold-plated RGB Scart cable, an 8Mb memory card and a GC/GBA link cable. Mint!

'Pretty boys'

This isn't another letter complaining about half-naked girls in games (well, it sort of isn't) or how all games for girls are full of fluffy pink things and are aimed at seven-year-olds. No, as a girl gamer I come with knowledge that'll help game designers make games most girls will buy. The answer is pretty boys! Think about it – loads of girls didn't buy *The Wind Waker*, even though it was cute and colourful, but the same girls bought *Ocarina of Time* 'cos Link looked so prittiful! So more games with cute boys would be much appreciated.
P.S. Enjiki is still obscene, though. I know you've been sent Manjikis and stuff, so here's another one...
Roxanne Chen, Bradford

Enjiki isn't obscene, just drawn with a whole lotta love. Many thanks for Manjiki; he's much more tasteful than the others we've received, and the only one that could ever have been printed in a family magazine like this. Makes me shudder just to think about them. Ed





'Hereby order'

Hello Infidels. I take it as my own personal duty to inform you of the single greatest miracle in the field of audial technology. Yes, humans, I am talking about using a headset. Not one from El Cheapo, but a real brand. After locating a socket on the front of my telly, I jacked in the headset, and switched on my black cube of entertainment.

I was playing *Hitman 2* at the time, as any man should, and immediately the orchestral score rolled into my eardrums. It wasn't until 15 minutes later that I was able to lift my jaw up from the floor. It gives you privacy, while the sound is the best I've ever heard.

I think that anyone who has a television with a headset port should make good use of it. Everyone else, I hereby order all of you to buy a telly with such a port built into it. That was really all I wanted to say.
Ruud Jacobs, Netherlands

So now you have headphones in the Netherlands too? Congratulations! Just wait until you hear a bit of surround sound... Ed

'Stroke of genius'

I have a brilliant idea as to how the successor to the Cube can claim the next round of console wars: VHS compatibility. Think about it.

Nobody wants a standalone VHS player anymore, as it takes up too much room around the TV, but if one were integrated into the 'N5' it would be a great selling point. People have huge back catalogues of VHS tapes that aren't watched because they can't be bothered to bring down a retired player from the attic. Sure, DVD compatibility is all well and good, but how many households aren't equipped with a DVD player of some sort already by now? VHS is the key to success. It's original. It's retro. It's one step backward but two steps forward. It's a stroke of genius!
Thomas Thompson, Pudsey

I think you've cracked it! Ed

Bonus Letters

I am curious about the varying width.
Victor Charlton, via email
I must admit, it can be perplexing. Ed

Just go and play *Micro Machines 64* again and you'll understand.
Dave Challis, via email
Nope. Still clueless. Ed

So you cannot do a rain dance around a zombie.
Peter Vermeir, Belgium
Makes sense. Ed

It would be of great help if, when you are reviewing a game, you mentioned your preferred controller setup.
John Downie, via email
I prefer gripping the pad between my knees and moving the control stick with my chin, while making whale noises. Ed

There is one reason for this and one reason only.
Adam Fell, via email
Blame the parents. Ed

Save my academic career, and make it backwards compatible.
Elliott Katz, London
It doesn't get much more backwards than that. Ed



'Picasso's summer'

In my summer vacation I visited the south of France, and there I found the 'Temple of Time' from *Zelda: Ocarina of Time*. Look at the top of it, at the little sun symbol with the yellow spot. It's actually a Triforce! This 'temple' was close to the painter Picasso's summer house, now a museum. Maybe Shigsy got his inspiration after checking out the Picasso museum on his holiday trip to France?
Eskil Vestre, Norway

Maybe. Just maybe... Ed

'Even my baby'

I have to challenge something you said on Newsdesk in issue 86. You claimed the 18-month head start PS2 had over the competition 'totally destroyed the opposition in terms of getting machines into people's homes'.

Oh really, Sherlock? Dreamcast had a big head start over PS2, plus PS2 screwed up its own launch with a shortage of machines and weak launch titles. So by your logic, having had such a head start, Dreamcast totally destroyed the competition in terms of getting machines into people's homes. Nice theory, but no cigar! There is a simple ruse that Nintendo can employ to make N5 a success:

HONOURABLE MENTIONS
Thanks to everyone who wrote in this month, including (but not limited to): Cameron Coles, via email; Rory Steele, via email; Sam Holly, Worthing; Alex Gordon, Cannock; James Stock, Norwich; William Felstead-Kyle, Bexleyheath; David Challis, via email; Stephen Staveley, Scarborough; Mark Cookney, Blackpool; Daniel Todesco, via email; Stuart Wybrow, via email; James Clarke, via email; Tom Gaffikin, London; Alexander Hoffmann, Switzerland; Dave Fortnam, via email; Jamie Pritchard, via email; Dan Livings, via email; William Fish, via email; Shaun Lomax, Bath; Sam Bridgett, via email; Knut Bolstad Jacobsen, Oslo; James Smith, via email; Matthew McWhinnie,

Suggestions for Go-sen, ideas for the N5, and the lovely Manjiki

Take a damn good look at what Sony is doing and copy it! Publicise the machine, make it a risk-free proposition for developers, retailers and customers. And make it backwards compatible. No need to copy Sony's games or hardware, just the rest of it.

Come on Nintendo! Games are all you do but you've had your butt kicked by a white goods manufacturer over your last two hardware iterations, despite having better games and hardware than Sony's. It doesn't take a genius to work out it's not what you make but how you sell it. Monkey see, monkey do. Even my baby has worked that out that if what you're doing isn't getting you the result you want, look around and copy someone who is.
Roly C, via email

***Shouldn't you have sent this letter to Paul's Sense Talk?* Ed**

***Even I don't ramble on that much!* Paul**

'All the slots'

We have months and months to ponder and salivate over the possible hi-jinks appearing on Nintendo's drawing boards. And the fact is, it's getting harder and harder to 'revolutionise' anything these days. Today's revolutions are merely revisions of what we had yesterday.

A point will come in the future where everything is running at its full potential and everything is perfect… That day hasn't yet arrived, thank god.

My guess is more of a nostalgic hope – all of Nintendo's consoles in one machine. It could happen, it wouldn't have to be that large seeing as all of them except Gamecube are solid-state machines. The only difficulty would be making all the slots for the various cartridges look attractive.
George Whittaker, Bedford

***Perhaps this could be combined with Thomas Thompson's VCR suggestion. Keep your ideas coming, folks – this stuff is pure gold.* Ed**



'Wah! Blork!'

Behold, **NGC**… I am surely the first to sludgerify every single surface in *Mario Sunshine*! Wah! Blork! Well, I was really bored, okay? And it's not like there's any other fun to be got from the Ricco Harbour level.
Tomas Woodbridge, via email

***Excellent work. That place must really stink.* Ed**

Bonus Letters

Can you name one average person who is going to buy anything related to GC-GBA connectivity? One?
Pierre Hyde, Herts
***Mr D Gosen?* Ed**

I don't expect you will remove it because of me, but please think about it.
Richard Mortensen, Trondheim
***No. It stays in.* Ed**

Do a lad hard on cash a little favour, would you?
Richard Townrow, via email
***Never.* Ed**

I don't know who copied who (or if they are both twins or something) but what I do know is that I deserve something for this.
John Luckhurst, Welling
***I owe you nothing.* Ed**

I know what I'd choose but most people seem to choose the opposite.
James Stock, Norwich
***Typical.* Ed**

Thanks for your help on the *Perfect Dark* thing. Thanks to you and the people who sent me info, my friend is now Perfect.
Martin Beverley, Rossendale
***All part of the service.* Ed**

As if you actually will.
Alex Dudok de Wit, via email
***You're right. I won't.* Ed**

'Stuck renting'

When stores such as Blockbuster ceased stocking N64 games I was devastated. Gamecube had not arrived yet and Nintendo owners were shoved aside. Unfortunately, to my disappointment, the same is happening again with Gamecube.

With the release of *Soul Calibur 2*, I went into my local Blockbuster to find that the game was stocked for PS2 and Xbox but not Gamecube. It's not just that game either. While the other consoles get the top 10 games, us GC owners are stuck renting *Scooby Doo* and *Die Hard*.
Alex McGoun, Thame

***That's most likely to be an isolated decision made by your local Blockbuster store, not a general policy. Anyway, more fool them – the GC version of* Soul Calibur 2 *went straight to No.1 on the UK all-formats chart, and is the biggest-selling version everywhere else in the world too. Numpties.* Ed**



△ The pixie who made *Soul Calibur 2* outsell the PS2 and Xbox versions.

'Moan and whine'

I came to console gaming later than most, at 29, and then because a friend introduced me to *Resident Evil* on the PlayStation. When it became a Gamecube exclusive I had to follow, and checking the mags when I heard of the move made me drool over such delights as *Rogue Squadron* and *Super Monkey Ball*.

Yet everybody seems to moan and whine. I was amazed when I first saw *Monkey Ball* and the *Resi* remake. I even bought a SNES, then an N64, to get the historical perspective of the old games before the new *Metroid*, *Mario* and *Zelda* came out. I missed out on a lot.

I can't buy and play games quickly enough before more come out that I want. My PS2 never saw as much action as my 'Cube. I've never bought 17 games for any other console I've owned, never mind in the first eight months of owning it!

But all people seem to do is bitch about the 'crappy' release schedule.
Peter Lello, London

***Welcome to the wonderful world of Nintendo fandom, Peter. It's good to have you on board.* Ed**

'Blissful years'

The *Legend of Zelda* series used to be referred to as RPG games. However, looking at today's definitions of an RPG they can no longer be classed as such. Instead, games mags tend to class the *Zelda* games as their own genre, referring to similar games as '*Zelda*-like.'

Now, correct me if I'm wrong, but would not Nintendo, in their never-

CORRECTION CORNER

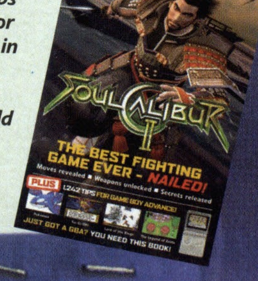


In issue 86's *Conflict Desert Storm* If You Like This box you said that *Freedom Fighters* got 80% but in the *FF* review just eight pages later you gave it 83%. It wouldn't have been so bad if *Freedom Fighters* had come out 20 months ago, but it was the same bloody issue!
Paul Gibb, via email

Whoops. Ed

On November 2003's tips book cover you state '*Soul Calibur II* The Best Fighting Game Ever – NAILED'. Everyone knows *Street Fighter II Turbo* is the best fighting game ever. Sorry to correct you on this.
Daniel Glenfield, Abingdon

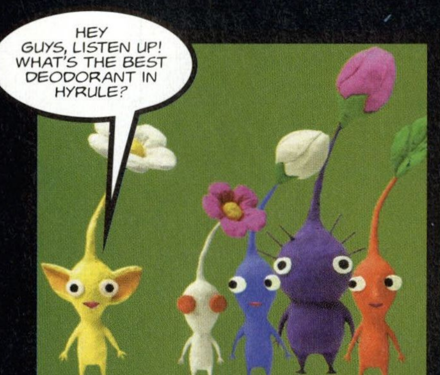
***And Daniel actually used to write those tips books for us back in the N64 days, so he should know. Git.* Ed**

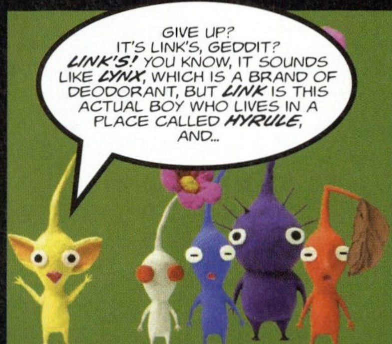


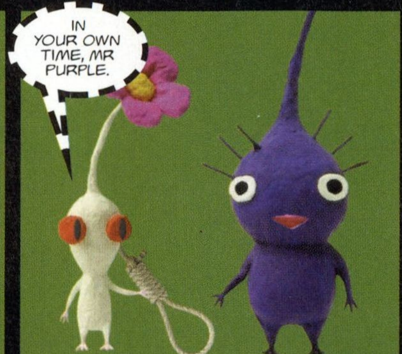
Glasgow; Jack Parker, Rhyl; Robert Ballantyne, via email; Callum McIntyre, Galloway; Charles Creed, Oxford; Peter Aitchison, via email; Vicki 'Pikmin H8r', via email; Tom Bond, Nottingham; Junior Whiteley, Doncaster; Gordon Allinson, Peaslake; Matthew Topping, Preston; Jonathan Mathews, via email; Manuel Gutiérrez Rojas, Netherlands; David Lane, via email; Lee Kavanagh, Westcliff on Sea; Sam Widger, Ferndown; Topi Väisänen, Finland; Chris Rushworth, via email; Heather Raymond, Pembrokeshire; Ben Norris, Bath; Lewis Voigtländer-Ford, Milton Keynes; Iain Macfarlane, Ulverston; Robert Hackney, Bearsden; Thomas Arch, Chorleywood; Alan 'Go Ness' Kerr, Lanark; and squillions of others. Keep writing in, people.

GriNtendo!

GOT A NINTENDO-RELATED JOKE TO TELL US? GREAT! SEND IT IN, BUT IF MR WHITE DOESN'T LIKE IT HE'LL TAKE OUT HIS ANGER ON POOR YELLOW, AND IT'LL ALL BE YOUR FAULT. MAKE HIM LAUGH AND YOU WIN A GAME. *THIS MONTH:* 'JOKE' INFLICTED BY LEWIS SMITH.









ending quest to do 'new things' with their franchises, be well advised to create *The Legend of Zelda: RPG*? Ahh, think of the four blissful years of development time, which they would take to make sure they got it right. It would be a revolution for the series, and would cause controversy among all those *Zelda* fans.
Alex Lesser, Gt Barton

***I reckon that a full-on* Zelda *RPG would be a phenomenal hit, particularly in Japan. Not sure how I'd cope with the loss of the combat system from* Wind Waker *though.* Ed**

'Modded'

In issue 86 you asked if anyone has a modded Gamecube. Well I have a lovely GC signed in a fetching silver pen by the one and only Shigsy.
Billy Kavanagh, Earl Shilton

***That's not quite what I meant by 'modded' but it's definitely a start. Can I 'borrow' it?* Ed**

'Fresh and new'

In response to John Kelly getting all dewy-eyed over the N64 in Issue 86; sure, it was a great console. While there wasn't a truckload of games released for the system, the quality was often exceptional. Games like *Mario 64*, *GoldenEye* and *Ocarina of Time* have yet to be bettered by anything on Gamecube.

What mainly made these games stand out was how revolutionary they were, which had a lot to do with the step up into 3D and the opportunities that brought. With the introduction of the current generation of consoles, no such advances were made – just a few extra polygons here and there.

So it's no surprise that many games play very similarly to their N64 counterparts. The best game for Gamecube happens to be *Metroid Prime*, which seems fresh and new because the *Metroid* franchise didn't appear on the N64.

Nintendo can't just 'make another N64'. They have to wait for technology to make another great leap, and then make sure they take full advantage of it, creating games that are so original, no-one's ever thought of them before.

In the meantime I think they're doing the best they can. And we also have the likes of Retro, Silicon Knights, Sega and Capcom churning out fantastic and, occasionally, really innovative titles.

I'm pretty pleased with my little black box.
Tom Laverack, Crowthorne

***Me too, even though mine's purple.* Ed**

'Case mod'

I know it's not a full-on case mod but I think my blue LED looks cool. It was a bugger to get the case open though, I ended up making a tool to get the screws out.
Craig Garrett, Luton

***Ah now, this is getting better. It's a small change, but a more techy one. And the result's pretty effective too. Maybe we'll see people coming up with some more radical mods now that the Gamecube is an absolute steal. Keep sending the pictures in to us at the usual address.* Ed**


△ **Anyone know how to make a funky LED that cycles through all the colours of the rainbow?**

SO TELL ME THIS...

Never mind the quality – feel the width.

1. Now that this *Zelda* game is not set in Hyrule, is this the end of Hyrule for *Zelda* games?
2. Will Link be able to ride a horse again?
3. Will there ever be a good version of *Theme Park* out on the Gamecube?
4. Is there any way I can get *Yoshi's Story* for the N64?
James Bailes, via email

1. I sincerely doubt it.
2. As soon as the stitches have healed, yes.
***3. No, but* The Movies *is coming out next year and it's a lot better than* Theme Park.**
4. It's widely available on eBay, and it may well be released on GBA some day.

1. Do you think that the new *Zelda* will continue on from *Wind Waker* since Link and Zelda were setting off to find new land?
2. What's the new *Donkey Konga* game about?
3. Any news on Mario?
4. Is there any chance of a second *Luigi's Mansion*?
Paul Finlay, via email

1. Sounds as likely a prospect as anything else.
2. It's about battering your bongos in time with the DK Rap (DK – hurrr – Donkey Kong is here, etc). See p18.
3. He's off the antibiotics and just needs a couple more weeks of bed rest.
4. Not in this lifetime.

1 Is Nintendo's new console called N5?
2 Will Gamecube-exclusive games such as *F-Zero GX* and *Metroid* ever appear on the PlayStation 2?
3 Is *Geist* good?
4 *Metroid* or *Zelda*?
5 Is *PSO* good?
6 Why the obsession with *Animal Crossing*?
7 Will there ever be a game about sheep?
Mark Hinds, Ireland

1. No, people are just using that name because it's Nintendo's fifth console, not including Virtual Boy and all the Game Boys. The others are the NES, SNES, N64 and Gamecube.
2. No.
3. Does God exist?
4. Both.
5. Yes. Sorry folks, it's been a slow month for questions.
6. Because it's fantastic?
7. Other than the GBA game that's all about sheep-herding, has a big picture of sheep on the box, and is called* Sheep, *you mean?

1. Is *Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles* worth buying *just* for the single player mode?
2. Is the GBA link up cable *vital* to play the game?
Matthew Rudman, via email

1. If you enjoy playing* PSO *on your own then* FFCC *is fine with one player. But you'll definitely get more out of it with two, three or four.
2. If you don't have link cables then you can only play on your own. Which sounds like what you were planning to do anyway.



POKéMON COLOSSEUM

The 'Mon have made more comebacks than Dracula and outnumber the So Solid Crew. Now they want a piece of 'Cube. Don't miss the first review – only in NGC!

PLUS!

MASSIVE 2004 PREVIEW INCLUDING:
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Magazine contents subject to change – but hey, that's life baby.

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If, one day, you should ever find yourself in the middle of a bar room brawl in Japan, then these choice battle cries might just stun your opponent long enough for you to leg it the hell outta there! Then you can get on with the serious business of buying more 'Cube games...



Rachel Ryan, currently recovering from a computer virus and a bit of a cold. She got up at 5am to send us the latest installment in our Japanese phrasebook. Just thought you ought to know.

VIDEOGAMES SAY THE FUNNIEST THINGS...

Kana: ヤベー！！

Reading: YA BE I!!

Meaning: A favourite utterance of those somewhat challenged in the vocabulary and grammar departments, this is the Japanese answer to the English "This sucks!"

Kana: よし!

Reading: YO SHI!

Meaning: Nope, not the dinosaur (which is spelt Yosshi in Japanese), this means "I'm ready", or "Let's go!", and is yet another common precursor to a battle or mission.

Kanji: よろしくお願いします

Reading: YO RO SHI KU O NE GA I SHI MA SU

Meaning: This isn't just a phrase used on greeting somebody, as stated in many guidebooks. It literally means "Please treat me favourably", and can be seen in any situation where the person is about to rely on you. Often seen in games where characters work on a team, as a request for your aid. Also almost universally badly translated – the reason why Japanese players on *PSO* appear to greet the enemies with "Pleased to meet you" via word select every time they enter a new area.

Kanji: 邪悪

Kana: じゃあく

Reading: JA A KU

Meaning: Evil. Commonly found resurrecting every 1000 years.

Kanji: 任かせて！

Reading: MA KA SE TE!

Meaning: "Leave it to me!" Confidentially shouted by an NPC on the player's side, before he rushes in alone, and predictably has to be rescued/mopped up off the floor later.

Kana: あっちいけ

Reading: AT CHI I KE!

Meaning: That most common of playground taunts, used by those too scared of retribution to use stronger language – "Get lost!"

Kana: ファイト!

Reading: FA I TO!

Meaning: Japanese rendering of the English word "Fight", universally recognised and indeed, commonly substituted for their own, perfectly usable words for the situation. Often heard as a cry of encouragement from spectators at a battle.

Kanji: 相手をしてやるぜ！

Reading: AI TE O SHI TE YA RU ZE!

Meaning: Literally, "I'll make you my opponent!" In very rough dialect, this is the japanese equivalent of "I'll take you on!"

Kanji: 負けるわけない

Reading: MA KE RU WA KE NA I

Meaning: "There's no way I'll lose!" A common insistence of over-confident underlings shortly before they're beaten into oblivion.

Kanji: よく頑張った！

Kana: よくがんばった！

Reading: YO KU GA N BAT TA!

Meaning: This literally means "You really went for it", a way of congratulating the player on victory. That is, when the game isn't offering you your "congratulation" (the 'S' being somewhat persistently omitted from videogames since the 1980s).

Kana: これはもしかしたら

Reading: KO RE WA MO SHI KAT TA RA?

Meaning: "Can it be....?" Uttered by NPCs when the most obvious of clichés becomes clear to them, clear as daylight though it has been to even the most brain-dead of players right from the start. Often hails in the scene where the villain loses their ridiculously inept disguise: "Oh no! Not... Team Rocket!" ...etc.

Kanji: 本当の力みせてやる!

Kana: ほんとうのちからみせてやる！

Reading: HON TO U NO CHI KA RA MI SE TE YA RU!

Meaning: "I'll show you my true power!" A classic line, delivered by innumerable villains as a precursor to the final attack/transformation that they really should have pulled off right at the start.

NGC TOP10



THE EVOLUTION OF... MARIO

The story of a living legend, plus some of the moments he'd probably rather we forgot about...

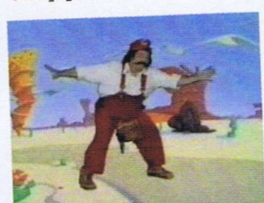
1 DONKEY KONG

Plumber-sized New York apartment plus giant stinking pet ape equals girlfriend in a hairy kidnap situation. Mario only had himself to blame, really. Unlike, say, a pet terrapin, a gorilla can't be flushed down the bog when it grows too big. Learn from his mistake, kids.
Plumber's mate: New washer for the tap? Ooh, you're looking at around three hundred quid, missus.

2 MARIO BROS

Double the manpower, double the labour costs. Nice thinking, Mazza. Releasing Luigi from his cupboard under the stairs meant that lady customers would be too put off by the body odour stink to see the gruesome duo ripping out all the copper pipes from under the sink and replacing them with plastic ones.
Plumber's mate: Spanner.

3 MARIO BROS: THE CARTOON



Wrestling legend 'Captain' Lou Albano starred as our pipe-cleaning, turtle-bashing hero, introducing an otherwise unremarkable animation series by talking in a gruff Italian accent and waddling around while singing (and dancing) 'The Mario'. Sing along now, everypeeps!
Plumber's mate: Deary me, what clueless plonker did this job? Big money...

4 MARIO PAINT



Not content with cornering the market in both bathroom renovation and rescuing minor royalty, Mario began to expand his empire into the field of home decoration. No job too small, no fee too big. Bish bosh, loads of dosh, etc.
Plumber's mate: Sorry love, we'll have to rip the whole lot out and do it again.

5 MARIO BROS: THE MOVIE



Trust Dennis Hopper to bring a touch of respectability back to the trade. Cheers, pal.
Plumber's mate: 'I'll send you a monkey wrench. Straight from my heart, plumber! You get a monkey wrench from me, you're plumbed forever, plumber! Baby wants to plumb! Baby wants to plumb!' Erm... Wrong movie?

6 MARIO TEACHES TYPING

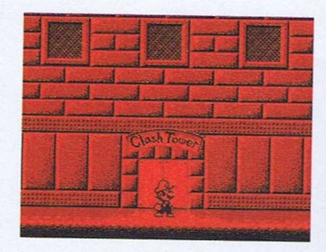


Pull the other one – with stubby fingers like that, there's no way Mario would be qualified to teach basic secretarial skills. Piffle.
Plumber's mate: Well, you've got a nasty bit of blocked guttering there. We'll need to take the roof off, knock the walls down, and pour sugar in your petrol tank.

7 MARIO'S EARLY YEARS

'Edutainment' is what they used to call this stuff. We call it 'stinking up Mario's good name with another entirely inappropriate cash-in'. Thank heavens they don't do that any more.
Plumber's mate: Hairballs in the U-bend.

8 MARIO CLASH



Having neglected the old yard thanks to all those other business ventures, Mazza's place became infested with vermin. Reeeeal damn shame, that.
Plumber's mate: Time to jack it all in and become a racing driver or something.

NINTENDO CHRISTMAS STOCKING FILLERS



1 PEACH'S SPECIAL RECIPE BOOK
Cake, cake and more cake.



2 DONKEY KONG'S COCONUTS
The biggest ones you ever saw.

3 DIDDY KONG'S NECKTIE
Already fashioned into a handy noose. With ceiling bracket.

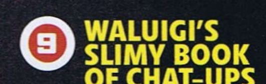
4 PICKLED YOSHI EGGS
With a half-formed Yoshi foetus inside. Yummy.

5 MAGIC BOO JELLY
Mould it into any shape you like, as long as it's a blob.

6 LUIGI DUST
Sprinkle it on the carpet and wait for your mum to vacuum it up. Hours of fun.

7 HARD ROCK KOOPA CANDY
The sweet that never wears out. Because it's made of solid bone.

8 PETEY PIRANHA SEEDS
Just like Little Shop of Horrors!



9 WALUIGI'S SLIMY BOOK OF CHAT-UPS
Waaah!



10 BOB-OMB ALARM CLOCK
Cock-a-doodle–BOOM! You won't sleep through this one!

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